

*The Satires of*  
**JUVENAL**

*translated by Rolfe Humphries*

*Indiana University Press* 1958  
BLOOMINGTON

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Library of Congress Catalog Card Number: 58-12213

Manufactured in the United States of America

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## *Introduction*

LITTLE is accurately known about Decimus Junius Juvenalis, whom we call Juvenal. Born at Aquinum, not so far from Monte Cassino, a little later than the middle of the first century A.D., he spent much of a fairly long and none too happy life in Rome, mostly during the days of bad emperors, one of whom may have exiled him to Egypt, whence he was recalled, maybe in late middle age, maybe a great deal later. He may have been about sixty, he may have been eighty, when he died. He took up writing in his maturity, not his youth; his works seem to have made little impression on his contemporaries, and to have burst on the world with excitement two and a half centuries after his demise. The poet Martial addresses him (or some one else with the same name) as a friend, but not as a fellow writer;

## INTRODUCTION

and Juvenal seems to have had no use for Pliny or any of his kin. The fact of which there seems to be least doubt is that he was a great writer of satire.

To Quintilian, and to Roman scholars and critics less well-known, the word *satire* had a meaning, and connotations, less narrow than it has for us. Into these, and into the history of the art form, we need not go, for satire, as Juvenal writes it, cries with the *saeva indignatio*, the slashing sense of outrage, that we associate with the term. He is Swift's cousin; we can feel at home. Not comfortably so, of course not, for this man is too good a hater.

What he hated were the ways of the world that Ovid, roughly a century before, had loved so dearly. *Beau monde*, *haut ton*—these did not amuse Juvenal. As for meretricious Rome, he shared the sentiments of (this too would have revolted him) an African king, Jugurtha the briber, dead before Ovid was born, who had called the city "venal and doomed if it only could find a purchaser." It had found, Juvenal thought, more purchasers than one, and more than one debaucher. He did not like it at all, and he said so.

That he had some warrant is attested by the roster of emperors under whom his days were spent. Nero, Galba, Otho (he is particularly scathing about Otho), Vitellius, Vespasian, Titus (these two were not so bad), Domitian, Nerva, Trajan, Hadrian. Domitian's fifteen years were a dreadful time; his successors were considerable of an improvement, and it may have been on his hopes of Hadrian that Juvenal founded the somewhat more optimistic addresses with which his seventh satire begins.

By Juvenal's day the status of the old middle class into which he was born had considerably worsened, degenerating from independence into cliency. In the good old days (which no satirist ever lived in) the relation between patron and client was an honorable one; not so now, with desperate avarice on one side and surly stingi-

ness on the other. The decision of his friend Umbricius (Satire III) to abandon Rome for a little place near Cumae is the only decent way out; the city stinks with its native rabble and its sewage of foreigners, Greeks and Egyptians being the worst; the aristocrats, particularly their women, are noisomely corrupt; the higher the court, the baser its conduct. There are, to Juvenal's way of thinking, two egregious abominations around imperial thrones—the mincing favorites, the professional informers. See Satire II and Satire X for a bill of particulars. Some of this, even in our day, is not entirely untimely.

That Juvenal is fiercely angry there can be no doubt. What saves his work from the level of compulsive obsession (and it is sometimes a narrow escape) is, for one thing, his high-flying eloquence, the artful but grand quality of his rhetoric, the wild charge of his Rabelaisian humor. He is really quite funny sometimes. And, underlying this, and once in a rare while breaking through, is the lyrical tenderness which must be at the deep heart's core of every satirist, else how could he care so much? Parts of Satire III, for example: a scene near the beginning and the idyllic, almost Theocritan, close; a few lines of compassion over the briefness of life and the swift coming of old age, set in the rather repulsive detail of Satire IX; these bucolic verses from Satire XI—

“Now, Persicus, listen.

Here's what we're going to have, things we can't get in a market.  
 From a field I own near Tivoli—this you can count on—  
 The fattest kid in the flock, and the tenderest, one who has never  
 Learned about grass, nor dared to nibble the twigs of the willow,  
 With more milk in him than blood, and mountain asparagus gathered  
 By my foreman's wife, after she's finished her weaving.  
 Then there will be fresh eggs, great big ones, warm from the nest  
 With straw wisps stuck to the shells, and we'll cook the chickens that  
 laid them.

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We'll have grapes kept part of the year, but fresh as they were on the vines

Syrian bergamot pears, or the red ones from Segni in Latium;  
In the same basket with these the lovely sweet-smelling apples  
Better than those from Picenum. Don't worry, they're perfectly ripened,  
Autumn's chill has matured their greenness, mellowed their juices."

The music here is not typical; in their usual run the hexameters of Juvenal, almost as if they too were proving his argument about the good old days, sound less like Ovid, Horace, Virgil, than they do like Lucretius. There is something harsh and rugged about them; they are not suave, but rough and tough and rugged. This is artistry, not accident; what Juvenal is trying to do is to establish the importance of satire, to raise it above the offhand, the easygoing, to give it not only mouth-filling sound, but epic stature. Do not mistake this, he says in effect, for the critical but amiable lucubrations of a gentleman; kindly pay attention, I mean this, and the style is calculated to prove it.

The Satires have not been translated into English verse in any great profusion. Dryden rendered half a dozen of the sixteen, and had various apprentices work on the others. Johnson's famous imitation of the Tenth has fixed in our minds its title, *On the Vanity of Human Wishes*. Gifford, in 1802, when Keats was seven years old, brought out a version very much in the vein of the eighteenth century, showing no anticipatory stirrings of the peculiar sensitivity that came in with the Romantics. All these translations, literal or free, are in heroic couplets, a medium much more in the air, and in the ears, of audiences from Dryden to Gifford inclusive than it is in our own time. More's the pity, perhaps; but I am not entirely sure that the polish, the linked-up wit, the fineness of this medium can bring over to us Juvenal's rough, tough, slashing manner. I have approximated the original meter, dactylic hexameter. This meter, in

our usage, tends to gallop if not run away, Buckety, Buckety, Buckety, Buckety, Buckety, Bump down. We are not skilled at writing spondees; when we substitute for the dactyl it is as apt as not to come out with a miserable trochee. To keep Juvenal from sounding (*horresco referens!*) like Longfellow, or even like my own version of Ovid, *praeceptor amoris*, I have tried to be conscious of the dangers and to compensate by having my hexameters only roughly scannable, with here and there an iamb, just to be on the safe side. I do not guarantee that I have caught every single one of Juvenal's *double-entendres*.

My special thanks are due my colleague, Dr. Wendell Clausen, whose expert recension of the text of Juvenal will before too long be happily available to scholars. He has cast a charitable eye over the typescript and saved me at least a score of dubious renderings. I am also indebted to Professor Gilbert Highet for friendly notes and suggestions, and to Professor William Anderson, of Yale University, for his useful studies of Juvenal's patterns in structure.

ROLFE HUMPHRIES

Amherst, Mass.  
May, 1958

THE LINE NUMBERS AT THE TOP OF EACH TEXT PAGE  
ARE THOSE OF THE LATIN TEXT IN THE LOEB EDITION

THE SATIRES OF

*Juvenal*

## THE FIRST SATIRE

### *On his compulsion toward this form of writing*

Must I be listening always, and not pay them back? How they bore  
me,  
Authors like Cordus the crude, with that epic he calls the Theseid!  
What license have they for this, their endless ranting and droning?  
Comedies, elegies—God! *Telephus* takes up a lifetime,  
*Orestes* runs over the margins, whole volumes, and still never ends.

No man knows his own house any better than I know that grove  
Where Mars dwells, or the cave under the Lipari Islands,  
Vulcan's, that is. What the winds do there, or how Aeacus tortures  
Ghosts in Hell, and who stole the Golden Fleece, and what ash trees



Monychus tosses around—all this is a noise and a shouting  
Loud in the plane trees of Fronto, shaking the statues of marble,  
Breaking the columns down with the din of inveterate readers.  
You can expect the same themes from the greatest and least of the  
poets.

I submitted in school, and, slapped around on occasions,  
Still gave Sulla advice to spend his days in retirement  
Slumbering deep. I conclude, with doggerel bards all around us,  
Sparing the page might be an act of mercy, but silly.

Still, if you have any time, or sense, or courtesy, let me  
Tell you the reason why I urge my car on the drill ground  
Where Lucilius drove the wheels of his chariot. Listen!  
When a limp eunuch gets wived, and women, breasts Amazon-  
naked,

Face wild boars at the games, or a fellow who once was a barber  
(I ought to know; he shaved me) grows richer than all the patricians,  
When that spawn of the Nile, Curly the Cur of Canopus,  
Hitches his crimson cloak with a jerk of his idiot shoulder,  
Air-cools his summer ring, or tries to—his fingers are sweating—  
And is unable to stand the burden of one more carat,  
Then it is difficult *not* to write satire. What human being  
Has such iron control of himself in this city of evil  
As to hold his tongue, when he sees, for instance, the lawyer,  
Matho, riding along in a new litter, bulging with Matho,  
And at his heels his informer, the man who denounced his great  
friend,

The man who will soon enough snatch from the eaten-out nobles  
Such as it is they have left, the terror of Lumpy the jester,  
Greased by Dearie the dwarf with a bribe, with a lay by Miss  
Honey—

Why not? Her husband's afraid, and isn't she only an actress?  
So you get jostled by earners (during the night shift) of heirlooms,  
Raised to the heavenly heights by their service to some rich old bag:  
Proculeius, one twelfth; Gillo, at least ten elevenths,  
Each in proportion paid off to his due, the size of his tool.  
Then let each, sure enough, take the price of his blood; let his pale-  
ness

Be like a man's who steps on a snake, barefoot; or a speaker's  
Waiting his turn to orate in the competition at Lyons.  
Why should I bother to say how my spleen burns dry with my anger  
When, with his lackeys in droves, this ward cheater shoves folks  
around?

Here's another fine sort, found guilty—(the verdict is nonsense:  
What does he care for the courts, just so he hangs on to his money?)  
Marius, exiled, is drunk by noon; if the gods are offended,  
That he enjoys; let the province weep in its impotent triumph!

Do not things like these rate the midnight oil of a Horace?  
Should I not bring them to light? Why fool with those frivolous  
stories,

All about Diomed's horses, Hercules, and the Minotaur's bellow,  
Icarus drowned in the sea, and Daedalus flying above him?  
Why should I write about these, when a husband, both cuckold and  
pimp,

Takes from his wife's best friends monies the law won't allow her,  
Perfectly trained, it seems, to keep his eyes on the ceiling  
Or let his nose sound off as he goggles into his wine bowl?  
Satire? What else, in an age when a youth can hope for a cohort,  
Spending the family funds, to the last red cent, on the horses,  
Dashing at breakneck speed, like the charioteer of Achilles,  
Down the Flaminian Way, showing off to his top-coated girl friend?

How can you help but fill whole notebooks? Stand at the crossroads,  
Here comes a forger of wills, all gotten up like Maecenas,  
Borne along by six men in an exhibitionist's litter;  
All it ever took to get him into the smart set  
Was a paper scrap, and a seal too easily moistened.  
Next comes some *grande dame*, who, when her husband is thirsty,  
Puts toads' blood in his wine, and better than any Lucusta,  
Shows less tutored girls how to cart off their husbands' black corpses,  
What if the town does talk? If you want to be Somebody, these days,  
Have the nerve to commit an act that rates jailing or exile:  
Probity merits praise—and has to starve on the highways.  
Crime pays off, in the form of gardens, palaces, tables,  
Antique silver, with goats, standing out embossed, on the goblets.  
How can you sleep, when some brides are males, and others, for  
money,  
Cheat on a groom with his father, and teen-agers lay married  
women?  
Talent perhaps I lack, but anger's an inspiration  
Equally valid for me, and for poets like—Cluvienus!

I must cover it all in this olio, everything human,  
Passion and prayer and fear, pleasure, distraction, and rage.  
All the way back to the day when Deucalion went to the mountain  
After the flood for his lots, and the stones grew softer and warmer,  
All the way back to the day when Pyrrha showed the young men  
Girls in their nakedness, and the rain clouds lifted and scattered,  
When was there ever a time more rich in abundance of vices?  
When did the jaws of greed ever open wider, or gambling  
Have such consummate appeal? Men do not come to the tables  
Only with wallets; they bring their safety-deposit boxes,  
Epic occasions, these, with a secretary disbursing

Funds for the war. Is this, do you reckon, a simple madness,  
Losing five thousand a throw, refusing a shivering slave  
One thin shirt for his back? Which of our fathers erected  
So many villas, or dined, alone, on seven-course dinners?  
One little basket stands at the threshold; come get it, ye hungry,  
Put your best clothes on! But first you must stand an inspection;  
The patron must look at your face and be sure you are not an im-  
postor.

Advance to be recognized! He orders the herald to summon  
Sons of the Trojan line; they crowd the portals, as we do.  
"Give to the praetor first, and then to the tribune!" A freedman  
Gets in the way. "I was first," he screams, "don't think you can scare  
me

Out of my place. Of course I was born on the banks of Euphrates,  
That my earrings would prove, no matter how much I denied it.  
Still, I own five smart shops that bring me in twenty thousand—  
What senatorial stripe does any more for its owner?  
Haven't I more than Licinus, or Pallas, or all of those fellows?  
So get out of my way!" And so the tribunes stand waiting,  
Wealth has the prior claim, and the badge of the sacred office  
Counts for less than the chalk on the feet of the upstart invader.  
Wealth, in our hearts, is set in the veriest Holy of Holies,  
Though we have not yet built temples in honor of Money.  
Oh, no! We worship Peace, Victory, Honor, and Virtue,  
Harmony, too—and the storks clatter their bills in derision.

So, when the highest officials figure out, at the year's end,  
What this dole brings in, how much it adds to their income,  
What of the rank and file? This is their clothing, their footgear,  
Bread on the table and fire in the stove. They come by the dozens,

Hands out for nickels and dimes, a man with his wife, sick or pregnant;  
Somebody else with a scheme—but the trick is all too familiar—  
Points at a litter, closed, and claims a dependent's allowance:  
"That's my wife inside. Hurry up, must we stand here forever?"  
"Tell her to stick out her head!" "Aw, let her alone, she is resting."

So the day goes by with a lovely order of business:  
First, this handout; then the forum, the courts of Apollo,  
And the triumphal statues, including some lousy Egyptian's,  
At the base of which only pissing's permitted.  
There they go, the poor souls, old clients, weary and hopeless,  
Though the last hope to leave is always that of a dinner,  
They must buy cabbage now, and a little kindling to cook it.  
Meanwhile, all by himself, on a couch unshared, their good king will  
Gobble and guzzle the choicest products of land and ocean.  
Down goes a whole estate; from such luxurious tables,  
Broad and antique, down goes a whole estate at one sitting.  
This will kill parasites off, at least; but who can endure this  
Luxury, grudging and cheap? A whole roast boar for one gullet  
When good custom decrees this is the fare for a party?  
You will get yours pretty soon, when you go and undress in your  
bathroom,  
Trying to ease your gut's distending burden of peacock.  
Hence come sudden deaths, too sudden for old men to make wills.  
What a good laugh for the town at all of the dinner tables!  
Hear the disgruntled friends cheer at the funeral service!

To these ways of ours the future will add just nothing.  
Our descendants' deeds and desires will follow the pattern.  
Vice is at its peak. Set sail, O writer of Satire,

Spread your canvas wide. “But where,” you may say, “is the talent  
Worthy the theme, the passionate freedom of speech of our  
fathers?”

Who says now: “I dare name names, and if they don’t like it,  
What does it matter to me? Who cares about Mucius’ forgiveness?”  
Try that today, and what happens? You soon are a torch in a tunic  
Standing where other men stand, victims, choking and smoking,  
Till you fall, and your corpse makes a furrow across the arena.  
What’s that you say? “Must I accept the sneers of this fellow  
Riding his cushioned ways, when I know he has poisoned three  
uncles?”

“Certainly. When he gets close, seal up your lip with your finger.  
If you say, *Here he is*, some one will think you’re informing.  
You will be safe if you send Aeneas and Turnus to battle,  
No one gets hurt if you write about the pride of Achilles,  
Or how Hylas was sought when he fell in the well with his pitcher.  
But when Lucilius roars and draws the sword in his anger,  
Then the listener’s mind, cold with its guilty knowledge,  
Reddens and sweats; hence tears and wrath. You’d best think it over;  
Once the helmet is on, it is much too late to be sorry.”

All right, then. If I can’t attack Tigellinus and his ilk,  
Let’s see what can be done about less fortunate mortals,  
Those whose ashes lie by the great roads out of the city.



## THE SECOND SATIRE

### *Against hypocritical queens*

OFF TO Russia for me, or the Eskimos, hearing these fellows  
Talk—what a nerve!—about morals, pretend that their virtue  
Equals the Curian clan's, while they act like Bacchanal women.  
Education they lack, though their parlors are crammed with bad  
statues,  
Plaster casts of the Stoics, and each of them thinks he is perfect  
If he has bought a bust of Aristotle, or maybe  
One of the Seven Wise Men, or some disciple of Zeno's.  
False fronts, all of them are. What street is not filled, overflowing  
With these glum-looking queers? You rail at foul practices, do you,  
When you're the ditch where they dig, the Socratic bugging per-  
verts?



Hairy parts, to be sure, and arms all covered with bristles  
Promise a rough tough guy, but the pile doctor smiles; he knows  
better

Seeing that smooth behind, prepared for the operation.  
They don't talk so much; their passion is rather for silence;  
They keep their hair cut short, but oh, those wonderful eyebrows!  
I like Peribornius better; at least he's honest about it,  
Shows what he is by his walk and his glances, so I can excuse him,  
Him and his likes, whose urge is frank enough for forgiveness.  
Worse, much worse, are the ones who denounce, with a Hercules'  
anger,

Vice, and waggle their tongues about Virtue, and waggle their rear  
ends.

Sextus does things that Varillus observes and remarks, "How disgusting!"

Yet he does them himself. A white man can sneer at a Negro,  
A cripple's a joke to the sound, but this is too much, that the Gracchi  
Scream to high heaven against people they call rabble rousers.  
This is confusion confounded, Verres denouncing a robber,  
Milo opposed to assassins, Catiline chiding Cethegus,  
Clodius damning adulterers, the second triumvirate shouting  
*Down with proscription!* We had, and not long since, such a fellow  
Who, in true tragic style, joined fornication with incest,  
Then re-enacted the code which would horrify all human beings,  
Not to say Venus and Mars, and while he was doing so, Julia  
Rid her fertile womb of blobs that resembled her uncle.  
Is it not perfectly right, therefore, that the vilest of sinners  
Hate these hypocrites? If they snap at you, turn on them, bite them!

One of this sour-faced crew used to cry out, over and over,  
"Where is the Julian law? asleep?" Laronia answered,

Smiling, “O happy age, with you to censor our morals!  
Rome may be decent again with this Cato descended from Heaven,  
But—tell me this, my friend: where do you purchase your perfume,  
All that balsam juice your hairy neck fairly reeks of?  
Don’t be ashamed; let me know the address, the name of the drug-  
gist.

Or if we have to rake up the laws and statutes, you ought to  
Cite the Scantinian first, and the sections enjoining you fairies.  
Go investigate men. They do more bad things than women.  
Safety in numbers, you know, and your hollow squares will protect  
you.

How you stick together, you queens! Our own sex’s behavior  
Holds no record like yours, case histories utterly loathsome.  
Media doesn’t lap girls, nor Flora go down on Catulla,  
But Hispo takes on young men, and is pale from two occupations,  
Do we ever plead at the bar? Does the courthouse ring with our  
bawling?

Some of us do eat raw meat, and a few might be lady-wrestlers,  
But look at you, spinning the wool, and mincing along with full  
baskets,

Defter at weaving than ever Penelope was, or Arachne,  
Doing the work that any cheap drab might squat on a log and ac-  
complish.

Don’t think I don’t know why Hister bequeathed to his freedman  
All he owned; why, in life, he rewarded his consort so richly.  
She who sleeps third in a big wide bed is certain to prosper.  
Marry, and shut your mouth; the wages of silence are jewels!  
After all this, do you think our sex deserves a verdict of *Guilty*?  
That’s like pardoning crows and laying all blame on the pigeons.”

That was telling them off, and they fluttered away, the fake Stoics,

Put to flight by the truth. Yet what won't they do? Here's a fellow,  
Creticus, all dressed up in chiffon, while the populace marvels  
Hearing his diatribes against the morals of women.

Fabulla, according to him, has broken the Seventh Commandment,  
So has Carfinia; both, in his indictment, are guilty.

Guilty they both may be, but neither would put on a nightie  
Thin as the robe he wears. "Oh, but," he says, "this weather—  
These July days, my dear; but aren't they *frightful*? Just stifling!"  
Strip completely, then; there's less disgrace if you're crazy.

Pretty garments indeed, to be seen with appeals and proposals  
Made in the name of the law before the victorious people  
Not yet healed of their wounds, or the hicks who've come down  
from the mountains,

Laying their ploughs aside, to open their mouths as they listen.  
How you would shriek if the judge came out gowned in mosquito  
netting!

Have you any idea that a witness looks decent in gauze?  
Creticus, you the keen, the intrepid apostle of freedom,  
Wearing peek-a-boo clothes! But this disease is contagious,  
It will infect more men, as the scab spreads all through the sheep-  
fold

From one sickly ram, as pig mange is epidemic  
From one boar, or a rotten apple spoils the whole barrel.

No one hits bottom at once. Some day you will go a lot farther,  
Dare something worse than this dress, and, little by little, be wel-  
comed

In the boudoirs where your friends run around with their foreheads  
in ribbons,

Earrings down to their necks, conducting, with sow tripes and wine  
bowl,

Services meant for the goddess who keeps men away from her threshold.

Only it's different here. "Remain far off, ye unholy!  
Women, remain far off: no females play on our trumpets!"  
So goes the cry, and the orgies blaze, like the torches, in secret.  
Here's a lad making his eyebrows long, with damp soot on a needle,  
Here's one taking a swig from a goblet shaped like a phallus,  
Another one fixing his eyes, with a golden net on his long hair.  
Here's one in sky-blue checks, another in pale-green satin  
With a male maid who swears, as does the master, "By Juno!"  
Another one holds a mirror, the scepter of Otho the Pathic,  
*Spoil of Auruncan Actor*, wherein he saw himself armored,  
Saw, and cried, *Off to the wars!* A remarkable piece of equipment,  
Worthy of history's note, to be found in the gear of a soldier!  
Such was the hero it took to knock off the doddering Galba  
With no risk to his skin, or should we say, his complexion,  
Masking his face with a mud pack of dough in his very last battle.  
Who ever acted like this? Not Semiramis, bearing the quiver,  
Not Cleopatra in gloom, on the deck of her Actian warship.  
Here are no decent words, not even good table manners;  
Here is freedom of speech, forsooth, in the piping falsetto  
Cybele's priest affects, a crazy gray-headed old man,  
Gobbler of any bird, a remarkable specimen, truly  
Worthy his hire—but why don't they follow the Phrygian fashion,  
Cut off the part they don't need? Why in the world are they waiting?

Gracchus has given a dowry, substance and sum, twenty thousand  
To a cornetist, or maybe a type who plays the white flute.  
Sealed, delivered, and signed. Happy Days. There's a crowd at the  
dinner.

The bride, almost in a swoon, reclines in the arms of her husband.

O ye nobles of Rome, is our need for a seer or a censor?  
Would you be startled more, be more aghast at the portent  
If a woman bore a calf, or a cow dropped a ewe lamb?  
Here's an ancient house, long privileged, under tradition  
To carry Mars' nodding shields along in the holy procession,  
Sweating under their weight, the hands through the thongs of the  
leather,  
Yet here's a son of that house, a Gracchus, given in marriage,  
All tricked out in a veil, in a bridal train, and in flounces!  
Romulus, father—whence came disgrace like this on your shep-  
herds?  
Whence, father Mars, such an itch to fasten itself on your grand-  
sons?  
Here is a man renowned for wealth, distinguished in breeding,  
Being wed to a man, and you do nothing about it,  
Not one shake of the helm, no spear point grounded in protest,  
Never an outcry to Jove! To hell with you, father Gradivus—  
Leave the neglected plains, the fields we used to call Martian.

“Early tomorrow,” one says, “I have to go to a service—  
Can you imagine?—at dawn.” “What for?” “Oh, must you be ask-  
ing?  
The marriage of one of my friends; only a few are invited.”  
Only a few! If we live long enough, they'll come out in the open,  
Try to get their names in the paper's society pages.  
Meanwhile, these dear little brides suffer one unspeakable torment:  
They can't conceive, or give birth, and hold their husbands with  
offspring.  
Well, that's all to the good, that nature denies to their bodies  
What their appetites crave; no diet of hormones will help them.

No use to hold out their hands for Luperci to paddle with goat-thongs.

Sterile they die.

But this vice is even outstripped by another.

Gracchus, dressed in a shirt, goes prancing around the arena,  
Armed with the net, and ready to run if he misses. What baseness!  
Gracchus, whose ancient line is prouder than that of Marcellus,  
Catulus, Fabius, Paulus, the privileged class in the boxes—  
Throw in the patron whose cash financed the show, for good measure.

That there's a hell underground, and a dirty old god with a punt pole,

Croaking black frogs, and a skiff loaded with thousands on thousands,

Not even children believe, except those who are still in the nursery.  
But suppose it were true—what would they think, the great heroes,  
Curius, Scipios twain, the shades of the great-souled Camillus,  
All the legion that fell at Cremera, the lost host of Cannae,  
What would these high hearts feel when a prince like this came to join them?

Would they not cry out for sulphur and torches and laurel  
Steaming with lustral smoke to bring them purification?

So, we have come to this. Our arms have invaded the Orkneys,  
Ireland, the northern lands where the light dwells long in the summer,

But the acts that are done in this proud city of victors  
Never were done by the men we have beaten down. Wait! They tell us

Here's an Armenian prince, softer than all of our fairies,  
Said to have given himself to some tribune's passionate ardor.

This, I suppose, could be called The Intercourse Between Nations.  
An innocent hostage he came here, but Rome is where we make  
men.

Let them stay in our town, and lovers will never be lacking.  
They can abandon their breeches, their bridles, their whips, and  
their daggers,  
Bearing to Yerevan our Roman customs and culture.

### THE THIRD SATIRE

#### *Against the city of Rome*

TROUBLED because my old friend is going, I still must commend him  
For his decision to settle down in the ghost town of Cumae,  
Giving the Sibyl one citizen more. That's the gateway to Baiae  
There, a pleasant shore, a delightful retreat. I'd prefer  
Even a barren rock in that bay to the brawl of Subura.  
Where have we ever seen a place so dismal and lonely  
We'd not be better off there, than afraid, as we are here, of fires,  
Roofs caving in, and the thousand risks of this terrible city  
Where the poets recite all through the dog days of August?

While they are loading his goods on one little four-wheeled wagon,  
Here he waits, by the old archways which the aqueducts moisten.



This is where Numa, by night, came to visit his goddess.  
That once holy grove, its sacred spring, and its temple,  
Now are let out to the Jews, if they have some straw and a basket.  
Every tree, these days, has to pay rent to the people.  
Kick the Muses out; the forest is swarming with beggars.  
So we go down to Egeria's vale, with its modern improvements.  
How much more close the presence would be, were there lawns by  
the water,  
Turf to the curve of the pool, not this unnatural marble!

Umbrius has much on his mind. "Since there's no place in the  
city,"

He says, "For an honest man, and no reward for his labors,  
Since I have less today than yesterday, since by tomorrow  
That will have dwindled still more, I have made my decision. I'm  
going

To the place where, I've heard, Daedalus put off his wings,  
While my white hair is still new, my old age in the prime of its  
straightness,

While my fate spinner still has yarn on her spool, while I'm able  
Still to support myself on two good legs, without crutches.

Rome, good-bye! Let the rest stay in the town if they want to,  
Fellows like A, B, and C, who make black white at their pleasure,  
Finding it easy to grab contracts for rivers and harbors,  
Putting up temples, or cleaning out sewers, or hauling off corpses,  
Or, if it comes to that, auctioning slaves in the market.

Once they used to be hornblowers, working the carneys;  
Every wide place in the road knew their puffed-out cheeks and their  
squealing.

Now they give shows of their own. Thumbs up! Thumbs down! And  
the killers

Spare or slay, and then go back to concessions for private privies.  
Nothing they won't take on. Why not?—since the kindness of Fortune

(Fortune is out for laughs) has exalted them out of the gutter.

“What should I do in Rome? I am no good at lying.  
If a book's bad, I can't praise it, or go around ordering copies.  
I don't know the stars, I can't hire out as assassin  
When some young man wants his father knocked off for a price; I  
have never

Studied the guts of frogs, and plenty of others know better  
How to convey to a bride the gifts of the first man she cheats with.  
I am no lookout for thieves, so I cannot expect a commission  
On some governor's staff. I'm a useless corpse, or a cripple.  
Who has a pull these days, except your yes men and stooges  
With blackmail in their hearts, yet smart enough to keep silent?  
No honest man feels in debt to those he admits to his secrets,  
But your Verres must love the man who can tattle on Verres  
Any old time that he wants. Never let the gold of the Tagus,  
Rolling under its shade, become so important, so precious  
You have to lie awake, take bribes that you'll have to surrender,  
Tossing in gloom, a threat to your mighty patron forever.

“Now let me speak of the race that our rich men dote on most  
fondly.

These I avoid like the plague, let's have no coyness about it.  
Citizens, I can't stand a Greekized Rome. Yet what portion  
Of the dregs of our town comes from Achaia only?  
Into the Tiber pours the silt, the mud of Orontes,  
Bringing its babble and brawl, its dissonant harps and its timbrels,  
Bringing also the tarts who display their wares at the Circus.

Here's the place, if your taste is for hat-wearing whores, brightly colored!

What have they come to now, the simple souls from the country Romulus used to know? They put on the *trechedipna* (That might be called, in our tongue, their running-to-dinner outfit),

Pin on their *niketeria* (medals), and smell *ceromatic* (Attar of wrestler). They come, trooping from Samos and Tralles, Andros, wherever that is, Azusa and Cucamonga, Bound for the Esquiline or the hill we have named for the vineyard, Termites, into great halls where they hope, some day, to be tyrants. Desperate nerve, quick wit, as ready in speech as Isaeus, Also a lot more long-winded. Look over there! See that fellow? What do you take him for? He can be anybody he chooses, Doctor of science or letters, a vet or a chiropractor, Orator, painter, masseur, palmologist, tightrope walker. If he is hungry enough, your little Greek stops at nothing. Tell him to fly to the moon, and he runs right off for his space ship. Who flew first? Some Moor, some Turk, some Croat, or some Slovene?

Not on your life, but a man from the very center of Athens.

"Should I not run away from these purple-wearing freeloaders? Must I wait while they sign their names? Must their couches always be softer?

Stowaways, that's how they got here, in the plums and figs from Damascus.

I was here long before they were: my boyhood drank in the sky Over the Aventine hill; I was nourished by Sabine olives. Agh, what lackeys they are, what sycophants! See how they flatter Some ignoramus's talk, or the looks of some horrible eyesore,

Saying some Ichabod Crane's long neck reminds them of muscles  
Hercules strained when he lifted Antaeus aloft on his shoulders,  
Praising some cackling voice that really sounds like a rooster's  
When he's pecking a hen. We can praise the same objects that they  
do,

Only, they are believed. Does an actor do any better  
Mimicking Thais, Alcestis, Doris without any clothes on?  
It seems that a woman speaks, not a mask; the illusion is perfect  
Down to the absence of bulge and the little cleft under the belly.  
Yet they win no praise at home, for all of their talent.  
Why?—Because Greece is a stage, and every Greek is an actor.  
Laugh, and he splits his sides; weep, and his tears flow in torrents  
Though he's not sad; if you ask for a little more fire in the winter  
He will put on his big coat; if you say 'I'm hot,' he starts sweating.  
We are not equals at all, he always has the advantage,  
Able, by night or day, to assume, from another's expression,  
This or that look, prepared to throw up his hands, to cheer loudly  
If his friend gives a good loud belch or doesn't piss crooked,  
Or if a gurgle comes from his golden cup when inverted  
Straight up over his nose—a good deep swig, and no heeltaps!

"Furthermore, nothing is safe from his lust, neither matron nor  
virgin,

Not her affianced spouse, or the boy too young for the razor.  
If he can't get at these, he would just as soon lay his friend's grand-  
ma.

(Anything, so he'll get in to knowing the family secrets!)

Since I'm discussing the Greeks, let's turn to their schools and pro-  
fessors,

The crimes of the hood and gown. Old Dr. Egnatius, informant,  
Brought about the death of Barea, his friend and his pupil,

Born on that riverbank where the pinion of Pegasus landed.  
No room here, none at all, for any respectable Roman  
Where a Protogenes rules, or a Diphilus, or a Hermarchus,  
Never sharing their friends—a racial characteristic!  
Hands off! He puts a drop of his own, or his countryside's poison  
Into his patron's ear, an ear which is only too willing  
And I am kicked out of the house, and all my years of long service  
Count for nothing. Nowhere does the loss of a client mean less.

“Let's not flatter ourselves. What's the use of our service?  
What does a poor man gain by hurrying out in the nighttime,  
All dressed up before dawn, when the praetor nags at his troopers  
Bidding them hurry along to convey his respects to the ladies,  
Barren, of course, like Albina, before any others can get there?  
Sons of men freeborn give right of way to a rich man's  
Slave; a crack, once or twice, at Calvina or Catiena  
Costs an officer's pay, but if you like the face of some floozy  
You hardly have money enough to make her climb down from her  
high chair.

Put on the stand, at Rome, a man with a record unblemished,  
No more a perjurer than Numa was, or Metellus,  
What will they question? His wealth, right away, and possibly, later,  
(Only possibly, though) touch on his reputation.  
‘How many slaves does he feed? What's the extent of his acres?  
How big are his platters? How many? What of his goblets and wine  
bowls?’

His word is as good as his bond—if he has enough bonds in his  
strongbox.

But a poor man's oath, even if sworn on all altars  
All the way from here to the farthest Dodecanese island,  
Has no standing in court. What has he to fear from the lightnings

Of the outraged gods? He has nothing to lose; they'll ignore him.

"If you're poor, you're a joke, on each and every occasion.  
What a laugh, if your cloak is dirty or torn, if your toga  
Seems a little bit soiled, if your shoe has a crack in the leather,  
Or if more than one patch attests to more than one mending!  
Poverty's greatest curse, much worse than the fact of it, is that  
It makes men objects of mirth, ridiculed, humbled, embarrassed.  
'Out of the front-row seats!' they cry when you're out of money,  
Yield your place to the sons of some pimp, the spawn of some cat-  
house,

Some slick auctioneer's brat, or the louts some trainer has fathered  
Or the well-groomed boys whose sire is a gladiator.  
Such is the law of place, decreed by the nitwitted Otho:  
*All the best seats are reserved for the classes who have the most  
money.*

Who can marry a girl if he has less money than she does?  
What poor man is an heir, or can hope to be? Which of them ever  
Rates a political job, even the meanest and lowest?  
Long before now, all poor Roman descendants of Romans  
Ought to have marched out of town in one determined migration.  
Men do not easily rise whose poverty hinders their merit.  
Here it is harder than anywhere else: the lodgings are hovels,  
Rents out of sight; your slaves take plenty to fill up their bellies  
While you make do with a snack. You're ashamed of your earthen-  
ware dishes—

Ah, but that wouldn't be true if you lived content in the country,  
Wearing a dark-blue cape, and the hood thrown back on your  
shoulders.

"In a great part of this land of Italy, might as well face it,

No one puts on a toga unless he is dead. On festival days  
Where the theater rises, cut from green turf, and with great pomp  
Old familiar plays are staged again, and a baby,  
Safe in his mother's lap, is scared of the grotesque mask,  
There you see all dressed alike, the balcony and the front rows,  
Even His Honor content with a tunic of simple white.  
Here, beyond our means, we have to be smart, and too often  
Get our effects with too much, an elaborate wardrobe, on credit!  
This is a common vice; we must keep up with the neighbors,  
Poor as we are. I tell you, everything here costs you something.  
How much to give Cossus the time of day, or receive from Veiento  
One quick glance, with his mouth buttoned up for fear he might  
greet you?  
One shaves his beard, another cuts off the locks of his boy friend,  
Offerings fill the house, but these, you find, you will pay for.  
Put this in your pipe and smoke it—we have to pay tribute  
Giving the slaves a bribe for the prospect of bribing their masters.

“Who, in Praeneste's cool, or the wooded Volsinian uplands,  
Who, on Tivoli's heights, or a small town like Gabii, say,  
Fears the collapse of his house? But Rome is supported on pipe-  
stems,  
Matchsticks; it's cheaper, so, for the landlord to shore up his ruins,  
Patch up the old cracked walls, and notify all the tenants  
They can sleep secure, though the beams are in ruins above them.  
No, the place to live is out there, where no cry of *Fire!*  
Sounds the alarm of the night, with a neighbor yelling for water,  
Moving his chattels and goods, and the whole third story is smoking.  
This you'll never know: for if the ground floor is scared first,  
You are the last to burn, up there where the eaves of the attic  
Keep off the rain, and the doves are brooding over their nest eggs.

Codrus owned one bed, too small for a midget to sleep on,  
Six little jugs he had, and a tankard adorning his sideboard,  
Under whose marble (clay), a bust or a statue of Chiron,  
Busted, lay on its side; an old locker held Greek books  
Whose divinest lines were gnawed by the mice, those vandals.  
Codrus had nothing, no doubt, and yet he succeeded, poor fellow,  
Losing that nothing, his all. And this is the very last straw—  
No one will help him out with a meal or lodging or shelter.  
Stripped to the bone, begging for crusts, he still receives nothing.

“Yet if Asturicus’ mansion burns down, what a frenzy of sorrow!  
Mothers dishevel themselves, the leaders dress up in black,  
Courts are adjourned. We groan at the fall of the city, we hate  
The fire, and the fire still burns, and while it is burning,  
Somebody rushes up to replace the loss of the marble,  
Some one chips in toward a building fund, another gives statues,  
Naked and shining white, some masterpiece of Euphranor  
Or Polychitus’ chef d’œuvre; and here’s a fellow with bronzes  
Sacred to Asian gods. Books, chests, a bust of Minerva,  
A bushel of silver coins. *To him that hath shall be given!*  
This Persian, childless, of course, the richest man in the smart set,  
Now has better things, and more, than before the disaster.  
How can we help but think he started the fire on purpose?

“Tear yourself from the games, and get a place in the country!  
One little Latian town, like Sora, say, or Frusino,  
Offers a choice of homes, at a price you pay here, in one year,  
Renting some hole in the wall. Nice houses, too, with a garden,  
Springs bubbling up from the grass, no need for a windlass or bucket,  
Plenty to water your flowers, if they need it, without any trouble.  
Live there, fond of your hoe, an independent producer,



Willing and able to feed a hundred good vegetarians.  
Isn't it something, to feel, wherever you are, how far off,  
You are a monarch? At least, lord of a single lizard.

"Here in town the sick die from insomnia mostly.  
Undigested food, on a stomach burning with ulcers,  
Brings on listlessness, but who can sleep in a flophouse?  
Who but the rich can afford sleep and a garden apartment?  
That's the source of infection. The wheels creak by on the narrow  
Streets of the wards, the drivers squabble and brawl when they're  
stopped,  
More than enough to frustrate the drowsiest son of a sea cow.  
When his business calls, the crowd makes way, as the rich man,  
Carried high in his car, rides over them, reading or writing,  
Even taking a snooze, perhaps, for the motion's composing.  
Still, he gets where he wants before we do; for all of our hurry  
Traffic gets in our way, in front, around and behind us.  
Somebody gives me a shove with an elbow, or two-by-four scantling.  
One clunks my head with a beam, another cracks down with a beer  
keg.  
Mud is thick on my shins, I am trampled by somebody's big feet.  
Now what?—a soldier grinds his hobnails into my toes.

"Don't you see the mob rushing along to the handout?  
There are a hundred guests, each one with his kitchen servant.  
Even Samson himself could hardly carry those burdens,  
Pots and pans some poor little slave tries to keep on his head, while  
he hurries  
Hoping to keep the fire alive by the wind of his running.  
Tunics, new-darned, are ripped to shreds; there's the flash of a fir  
beam

Huge on some great dray, and another carries a pine tree,  
Nodding above our heads and threatening death to the people.  
What will be left of the mob, if that cart of Ligurian marble  
Breaks its axle down and dumps its load on these swarms?  
Who will identify limbs or bones? The poor man's cadaver,  
Crushed, disappears like his breath. And meanwhile, at home, his  
household

Washes the dishes, and puffs up the fire, with all kinds of a clatter  
Over the smeared flesh-scrapers, the flasks of oil, and the towels.  
So the boys rush around, while their late master is sitting,  
Newly come to the bank of the Styx, afraid of the filthy  
Ferryman there, since he has no fare, not even a copper  
In his dead mouth to pay for the ride through that muddy whirl-  
pool.

"Look at other things, the various dangers of nighttime.  
How high it is to the cornice that breaks, and a chunk beats my  
brains out,  
Or some slob heaves a jar, broken or cracked, from a window.  
Bang! It comes down with a crash and proves its weight on the side-  
walk.

You are a thoughtless fool, unmindful of sudden disaster,  
If you don't make your will before you go out to have dinner.  
There are as many deaths in the night as there are open windows  
Where you pass by; if you're wise, you will pray, in your wretched  
devotions,  
People may be content with no more than emptying slop jars.

"There your hell-raising drunk, who has had the bad luck to kill no  
one,  
Tosses in restless rage, like Achilles mourning Patroclus,



Furnaces blast and anvils groan with the chains we are forging:  
What other use have we for iron and steel? There is danger  
We will have little left for hoes and mattocks and ploughshares.  
Happy the men of old, those primitive generations  
Under the tribunes and kings, when Rome had only one jailhouse!

“There is more I could say, I could give you more of my reasons,  
But the sun slants down, my oxen seem to be calling,  
My man with the whip is impatient, I must be on my way.  
So long! Don’t forget me. Whenever you come to Aquino  
Seeking relief from Rome, send for me. I’ll come over  
From my bay to your hills, hiking along in my thick boots  
Toward your chilly fields. What’s more, I promise to listen  
If your satirical verse esteems me worthy the honor.”



#### THE FOURTH SATIRE

### *Against a big fish*

CURLY the Cur again! I shall have to summon him often  
Onto our stage, this monster, with not a redeeming virtue,  
Vicious, debauched, and sick, but strong in adulterous passion,  
So much so that he scorns widows and unmarried women.  
What difference does it make that his colonnades are extensive,  
Tiring his horses and mules, that he rides in the shade of his wood-  
lands,  
That he's bought acres adjoining the forum, and God knows what  
mansions?  
No bad man is well-off, least of all a seducer, whose incest  
Gets him to bed with a Vestal, a virgin who must, in atonement,  
Lie under earth while her blood still runs alive in her veins.

Now to more trivial acts. And yet, if another had done them,  
John Doe or Richard Roe, he would run afoul of the censors.  
What's disgraceful for them is quite all right for our Curly.  
What are we going to do? His person is even more loathsome  
Than any charge we can bring. He paid off for a mullet, a red one,  
Three hundred bucks. That comes out to fifty dollars a pound.  
Shrewdness like that I'd praise, and call it the work of an artist,  
If such expense insured his name in an old man's will,  
Or—this would make more sense—if he spent it on some great fe-  
male,

Who scorns the public gaze, in her litter with outsize windows.  
No such thing; he bought this for himself. Remember the gourmet,  
What was his name? Apicius? Curly makes him look cheap,  
Curly, who used to run around in a jock strap of paper,  
Pays for a mullet this much. The silly fish must have cost him  
More than the fisherman would. You could buy an estate in a prov-  
ince

At that price, or less (it would partly depend on the dust storms).  
What kind of feasts should we think His Imperial Majesty gobbles,  
When one purple punk of the Palatine pukes up all this,  
One side dish, so to speak, from his rich and opulent banquet?  
Curly, head man in the court, is the same one who used to go bawl-  
ing,

Peddling shad, broken lots, in the Alexandrian alleys!

O Muse of Epic, begin! Will the audience kindly be seated?  
No fictive music now, but the facts. Relate them, ye Pierian maid-  
ens!

(Calling you maidens, I hope, will serve me to some advantage.)

When the last of the Flavian line was flaying the world, half-lifeless,

And Rome was the slave of a Nero, the bald-headed tyrant Domitian,

Lo, a remarkable thing befell. Off Doric Ancona,  
Where the temple of Venus towers high on the headland,  
Into the nets there fell a leviathan of a turbot,  
Huger than those that lie under the ice of Maeotis  
Till it is cracked by the sun, and its denizens, sluggish and torpid  
From the long cold, thaw out, disembugued at the Black Sea harbors.

This huge fish the owner of boat and tackle has saved up  
For the Great High Priest—for who would dare put on the market,  
Who would dare buy, such a fish, with the shores alive with informers?

Every inspector of seaweed would pounce like a hawk on the captain,

Ready to swear and depose, and with many a witness to back him,  
That the fish had been fed in His Majesty's ponds, had absconded,  
Must, as a fugitive, be duly returned to The Master,  
Citing authorities like Armillatus and Sura,  
Who prove that everything handsome and rare that swims in the ocean,

*Ipso facto*, belongs to the royal kitchen. So, give it  
Rather than let it spoil.

The deadly season of autumn  
Yields to the frost, sick men begin to hope for their seizures  
Every fourth day, not third. The ugly winter is whistling  
With his refrigerant breath to keep the booty from spoiling.  
Here comes a man in a rush, as if afraid of a south wind.  
Below him lie the lakes where Alba, although in runs,  
Still keeps the Trojan fire and worships Vesta the lesser.  
There, for a while, his progress is blocked by the awe-struck traffic.



Then it gives way, and the doors, on easy hinges, swing open.  
The fish goes in. Shut out, the gentlemen of the Senate  
Stand there and stare. Inside, in His Majesty's Awful Presence,  
The man from Picenum speaks: "Receive," says he, "an oblation  
Too great for a private kitchen. Be this a day of thanksgiving,  
Purge Thy royal gut of the last full feast it has eaten;  
Gorge on this turbot, saved for Thy gracious administration.  
He insisted on being caught." What could be cruder? And yet  
The great man beams in pride. There is nothing he cannot give  
credence

When it's about himself, when his power is praised equal to Heaven's.

But there's no dish big enough for the fish!

Summon the council,  
Men whom the emperor hates, men on whose blanching faces  
Sits the sign of that great and most uncomfortable friendship.  
"Hurry!" the chamberlain calls, "Our Royal Master is seated!"  
Pegasus dashes in first, grabbing his gown in his hurry,  
Overseer, newly set up in charge of a city bewildered.  
What could officials be but overseers in those days?  
This was one of the best, a devout and scrupulous jurist,  
Even in evil times tempering justice with mercy.  
Crispus came next, a pleasant old man, whose manner of speaking  
Proved his gentle soul. At the side of an absolute monarch  
Who might have been of more use, if he were only permitted,  
Under that pest, that plague, to raise his voice, to condemn  
Savage counsels of hate, to express his honest opinions?  
Nothing more prone to caprice than the sensitive ear of a tyrant  
On whose whim depends the fate of a friend, who is safest  
Talking about the heat, or the rain, or the clouds in the springtime.  
Crispus never flailed his arms upstream in that current,

Crispus wasn't the man for freedom of speech and the spirit,  
Betting his life on the truth. So, Crispus lived many winters,  
Saw his eightieth year, safe, in that court, by such armor.

Next to him hurried a man his age; his name was Acilius.  
With him came his son, a decent youth, whom an ill death  
Waited for, not much later, sped by the swords of his master.  
A miracle, in our time, to reach old age and be noble!  
Better not get too big: a little brother to giants,  
That's high enough to aspire. It availed young Acilius nothing,  
Fighting naked with lions and boars in the Alban arena.  
Who, in our time, does not see through the wily tricks of patricians?  
Who would wonder today at the simple cunning of Brutus?  
When our kings wore long beards, it was easy enough to deceive  
them.

Rubrius, looking no better, came next. He wasn't a noble.  
That may have been reassuring, but then, he had been convicted  
Of an old offense, and one that is better not mentioned,  
Worse than the sodomite Nero, who lashed other pathics with satire.  
Montanus was there. He was late because of the size of his belly.  
Curly the Cur was there, who reeks, in the morning, with odors  
That would outstink the smell of at least two funeral parlors.  
Pompey was there, an informer whose whisper could cut your throat,  
Fuscus, whose battles were planned in hallways of Parian marble,  
Tactics just the right sort to suit the vultures of Poland.  
Careful Veiento came, and with him the deadly Catullus  
Burning with love for a girl he had never seen. What a portent,  
Even for times like these! He was blind, but a flattering fawner,  
Sinister, one who belonged with the beggars infesting the bridges,  
Swarming out to the wheels, or blowing the richer ones kisses.

No one was more amazed at the fish than he was; he gestured  
Toward the left as he spoke; it happened to be on his right.  
That was always his way, if he praised some Cilician bruiser  
Or the stage machines that lift the boys to the awnings.  
Veiento was almost as bad; carried away by his frenzy  
Almost into a trance, he presently vaticinated:  
“Omens of triumph I see, my Lord. Thou wilt capture a monarch  
Foreign-born like this turbot, Arviragus of the Britons.  
This I can tell by the spiky fins erect on the backbone.”  
Fabricius went on and on; the only thing he omitted  
Was the place where the fish spawned and the actual date of its  
    birthday.

“What think you? cut it up?”—“My Lord,” Montanus says, “Never!  
Spare it such mortal disgrace, but let a deep shell be provided  
Ample to hold in its delicate sides these giant dimensions.  
What such a dish needs now, at once, is fire-bringer Prometheus!  
Hurry with clay and wheel! But from henceforward, Great Caesar,  
Let potters follow your camp!”

    The motion was duly carried,  
Worthy, it seemed, of the man who knew the debauches of Nero’s  
Midnight hunger and thirst, his lungs inflamed from the wine cups.  
No man, in my day, was a more experienced eater.  
He could tell, with one bite, where an oyster was born, where it  
    came from,  
Whether the Lucrine Rocks, or the beds of Richborough, England.  
Just one glance, and he’d tell you any sea-urchin’s home port.

Meeting adjourned, council dismissed. They are ordered to get out,  
Men whom this mighty Lord had dragged posthaste to this castle,  
Frightened, in panic, expecting news of invasions by Germans,

Desperate tidings borne from every part of the empire.  
Would that to nonsense like this he had given all his devotion,  
Spared that savage caprice which took away from the city  
Bright illustrious souls. No retribution, no vengeance!  
Nobles he could kill. He was soaked in their blood, and no matter.  
But when the common herd began to dread him, he perished.



## THE FIFTH SATIRE

### *Against mean patrons, and despicable clients*

TREBIUS, if you persist in these ways, so utterly shameless  
That you think it is the highest good to live on another man's table,  
If you can stand for treatment the cheapest satellites never  
Would have endured at the unjust board of an earlier Caesar,  
Then I'd not trust your word under oath. I know, it takes little,  
Little enough, to keep a belly content, if that's lacking,  
Is there no place on the sidewalk, no room on one of the bridges,  
No smaller half of a beggar's mat where you could be standing?  
Is a free meal worth its cost in insult, your hunger  
So demanding? By God, it would be more honest to shiver  
No matter where you are, and gnaw on mouldy dog-biscuit.

First, get this into your head: an invitation to dinner  
Means a payment in full for all of your previous service.  
One meal is your share of the profit of this great friendship. Your  
master

Puts it on your account, a rare enough entry, sufficient,  
Just the same, to balance his books. Perhaps two months later  
It may please him again to invite his neglected client  
Lest the lowest place at the lowest table be empty.  
"Join us," he says. The height of good luck! What more could you  
ask for?

Trebius has good cause to break off his sleep, to come running,  
Shoelaces not yet tied, worried that some one else,  
Or every one else, may arrive before he does with his greetings,  
While the stars fade out in the early hours of the morning,  
While the planets wheel, sluggish and cold in the heavens.

What a dinner it is! Blotting paper would shudder  
To sop up wine like this, which turns the guests into madmen.  
"You bastard!" "You son of a bitch!" These are preliminaries  
To the main event, a battle royal, the freedmen  
Versus the rest of you, with goblets and crockery flying.  
You stop a jug with your face, pick up a napkin to wipe it,  
Find your bloody nose has turned the damask to crimson,  
While your host drinks wine drawn off when the consuls were  
bearded,

Juice of grapes that were trod during wars a hundred years past.  
Will he send one thimbleful to his cardiac friend? No. Never.  
Tomorrow he'll drink again, a vintage from Setian or Alban  
Mountains, the jar so black with soot and dust that he cannot  
Tell where it came from, what year, such wine as Paetus and Priscus,

Chaplet-crowned haters of Tyrants, would drink on republican  
birthdays  
Honoring Brutus and Cassius.

Your noble patron, this Virro,  
Holds cups encrusted with amber, saucers jagged with beryl,  
Never letting them go; to you no gold is entrusted,  
Or, if it ever is, a watcher leans over your shoulder  
Keeping count of each jewel, watching your sharpened nails.  
Pardon precautions like these, but his jasper is wonderful, truly.  
Virro, and many like him, transfer from their rings to their goblets  
Stones like these, the kind Aeneas wore on his scabbard.  
You will drink from a cup that is cracked and fit for the junk pile,  
Tradable, maybe, for sulphur, one of those four-nozzled vessels  
Named after Nero's fool, the cobbler Beneventum.

If his stomach's inflamed from the food and wine, he is given  
Water, sterilized first by boiling, then cooled in the snow.  
You did not get the same wine, I complained; that's half of the story,  
The water is different, too. You are handed the cup by the fellow  
Who runs in front of his car, a Gaetulian out of the stables,  
Or by the bony hand of some black Moor, not a person  
You'd enjoy meeting at night where the tombs line the roads of the  
city.

Standing in front of your host is the very flower of Asia,  
Bought for a higher price than the whole estates of old kings,  
Tullus, the fighter, and Ancus, were worth. In fact, you could throw  
in

All of the goods of all of the kings of the Rome of the legends.  
This being so, if you thirst, look for your African server.  
His expensive boy cannot mix a drink for a poor man,  
But he's so lovely, so young! When do you think he will listen,



Whether it's hot or cold you request? Oh no, it's beneath him  
To serve an old client; he's irked that you ask, or sit while he's  
standing.

Every great house is full of these supercilious slave boys.  
Look at this one, who grumbles, handing you the hard bread  
Made of the coarsest bran, or the mouldy jawbreaking crackers.  
But our lord receives the tenderest, snowiest, finest  
Proof of the kneader's art. Respect the breadbasket, please!  
Keep hands off! If you reach—such nerve is hard to imagine—  
Some one will cry, "Put it down! You shameless guest, can't you ever  
Learn which kind is yours, and tell your bread by its color?"  
Was it for this, you'll think, that you left your wife in the morning,  
Ran up hill through the cold, with the hail rattling down in the  
springtime,  
With your porous cloak distilling water in buckets?

In comes a lobster, immense, in fact, too large for the platter,  
Waving its tail in contempt at the crowd, as it rides along, high-  
borne,

To the table's head, with asparagus for a garnish.  
What do you get? One prawn, half an egg—the kind of a supper  
People leave at the tombs of the dead by way of a token.  
He soaks his fish in the best olive oil; you get some pale coleslaw  
Reeking of stuff that would smell very fine if used in a lantern,  
Grease that has ridden the Nile in the meanest African lighters.  
Used as a lotion, it gives you absolute privacy, bathing,  
Guaranteed, furthermore, as a preventive of snake bite.  
Virro will have a mullet, from Corsica or Taormina,  
Since our seas are fished out, so desperate are our gluttons.  
Too many nets are spread near home, and our Tuscan fishes  
Never attain full size, so the provinces have to supply them.

That's where the market is found by the legacy-hunters. Laenas  
Makes his purchases there, and Aurelia sells, at a profit.  
Virro is given a lamprey, the greatest that Sicily ever  
Sent to our coast; when the wind from the south is still in his prison,  
Drying his wings, all craft despise the wrath of Charybdis.  
You get an eel, so-called, but it looks much more like a blacksnake,  
Or you may get a pike from the Tiber, mottled with ice-spots,  
A riverbank denizen, fat from the rush of the sewers,  
Tough enough to swim uptown as far as Subura.

A word in the ear of our host, if he'd be so kind as to listen:  
"No one asks for such gifts as Seneca, Piso, or Cotta  
Sent to their humble friends, when giving was reckoned an honor  
Greater than titles or symbols of power. All we can ask for  
Is that you dine with us on decent terms, just another  
Citizen like ourselves. Do this—all right, all right, we can't stop you  
Being rich for yourself and poor to your friends. They all do it."

What comes in now? Goose liver, tremendous, and also a capon  
Big as a goose, and a boar, worthy, of blond Meleager's  
Steel, served piping hot, and truffles, assuming the season  
Right for their growth, with enough spring thunder to swell their  
production.

What did that gourmet say? Alledius, I think his name was—  
"Keep your wheat for yourself, O Libya; unyoke your oxen,  
Just so you send us your truffles!"

Meanwhile, to make you more angry,  
You will behold the carver, the sleight-of-hand master, performing,  
Prancing around, and waving his knife like a wand. How important,  
So his master says, to make the right gestures when carving

Rabbit or fowl! Shut your mouth, don't act like a freeborn Roman,  
Don't think those three words of your name have any real meaning.  
Do you want to be dragged from the house by the heels, like Cacus  
the monster

After the beating he took from Hercules? When will Virro  
Pass you the cup? He won't. And he won't risk any pollution  
Touching his lips to the rim which a wretch like you has infected.  
Which of you has the nerve, is so abandoned or silly  
As to say to that prince "Drink up!" When your jacket is shabby  
There are many remarks it is better to leave unspoken,  
But should a god, or some chap who looked like a god, be more  
kindly

Than your fates ever were, and give you the cool twenty thousand  
Suiting the rank of knight, how quickly you'd find yourself Some  
One,

Not a nobody now, but Virro's most intimate crony.  
"Something for Trebius there! Give Trebius one more helping!  
Brother, wouldn't you like a cut from the loin?" Money, money,  
You are the one he calls brother, the one he gives homage and  
honor.

One word of caution, though: if you want to be patron and prince,  
Let no little Aeneas go playing about in your hallways,  
Let no small princess appear as father's small sweetheart.  
Nothing will bring you more friends than a wife who is certified  
barren,

But, the way things are now, should your wife present you with  
triplets,  
Virro'd be utterly charmed with your chattering brood, and to show  
it,

Order for each a little green shirt, and peanuts, and pennies,  
When the small parasites come and hang around at his table.

Toadstools the poor will get, but Virro is feasted on mushrooms  
Such as Claudius ate, before the one his wife gave him.  
(Since then, he ate no more.) To himself and the rest of the Virros  
Fruit will be served. Such fruit you'd be happy with even a smell  
of,

Fruit such as grew in the days when Autumn was never-ending,  
Fruit you would think had been robbed from the girls of the Golden  
Orchards.

You get a rotten old apple, the kind that is given a monkey  
All rigged out with a helmet and shield, and afraid of a whipping  
While he is being trained to toss the spear from a goat's back.

Maybe you think that Virro is cheap. That's hardly the reason.  
He does this to hurt, on purpose. What comedy ever,  
What buffoon, is more fun than a gut that rumbles in protest?  
So, in case you don't know, all this is done to compel you,  
Force you, to tears of rage, and the grinding of squeaky molars.  
You're a free man (you think) and the guest of a royal good fellow.  
He knows, too damn well, you're the slave of the smell of his  
kitchen.

Oh, he's perfectly right. Only a slave would endure him  
More than once. I don't care how poor you were in your childhood,  
Whether you wore on your neck amulets golden or leather.  
You are sucked in, now, by the hope of a dinner. "He'll give us,  
Surely," you say, "at least the remains of a rabbit, the scraps  
Off a wild-boar's haunch, or a picked-over carcass of capon."  
So you sit there dumb, all of you, silent, expectant,  
Bread in your hand untouched, ready to spring into action.  
He's a wise man to treat you like this, for if you can stand it,  
You can stand anything else, and, by God, I think that you ought to!

THE FIFTH SATIRE

*lines 171-173*

Some day you'll offer your shaved-off heads to be slapped, and a  
flogging  
Won't seem fearful at all. You have done what you could to deserve  
them,  
Trebius. Such a feast! And such a wonderful friendship!

## THE SIXTH SATIRE

### *Against women*

CHASTITY lingered on earth, I believe, in the reign of King Saturn.  
She was seen then, for a while, a long time ago, when cold caves  
Offered men tiny homes, and enclosed, in their common shadow,  
Fire and the household god, the herd and the owner together.  
Those were the days when a mountain wife had a mattress to lie on,  
Made out of leaves or straw or the hides of the native creatures.  
There were no city girls like Cynthia, known to Propertius,  
None like the one who wept, red-eyed at the death of her sparrow.  
No: these women had breasts for big fat babies to tug at.  
Often they looked as rough as their acorn-belching husbands.  
Men were different then, when the world and the skies were younger,  
Sons of the riven oak, or scions of clay, unfathered.

Under Jove, it might be, you could still distinguish the footprints  
Chastity might have left, but that was when Jove was a stripling,  
Not yet the time when the Greeks swore oaths (and broke them);  
when no one  
Feared the thief in his cabbage or fruits, when his garden was open.  
Justice, by slow degrees, deserted earth for the heavens,  
Chastity at her side, and so the sisters departed.

Postumus, it's an old custom, hallowed by ancient tradition,  
To bounce another man's bed, put horns on the brow of its genius.  
Every other crime came in the Era of Iron,  
But the Silver Age, earlier still, first saw the rise of these cheaters.  
Yet, in a time like ours, here you are, preparing for marriage,  
Contracts, and pledges, and banns, and your hair getting combed by  
a barber  
*Un vrai maître de coiffure*, and perhaps you have bought her the  
ring.

Surely you used to be sane. Postumus, are you taking a wife?  
Tell me what Fury, what snakes, have driven you on to this madness?  
Can you be under her thumb, while ropes are so cheap and so many,  
When there are windows wide open and high enough to jump down  
from,

While the Aemilian bridge is practically in your back yard?  
Or if no such way out appeals to you, isn't it better  
To get some young boy in your bed to sleep with you in the night-  
time

Without threatening suits or insisting on costlier presents,  
Uncomplaining if you refuse to breathe hard at his bidding?

But the Julian law suits you fine. So you want a sweet little youngster,  
Heir to your vast estate, though you'll have to do without squab,

Filet of catfish, and all the nice legacy-bait of the market.  
Postumus, what can't be done, if a woman takes you for a husband?  
You, most notorious rake of all the tail-chasers of Rome,  
You, who have hidden in closets, or under the bed of some cuckold,  
You stick your silly head in the marital noose? You go seeking  
A virtuous old-fashioned wife? It's time to summon the doctors.  
What a real sweetheart you are! If a decent and modest woman  
Falls to your lot, flop prone on your face at the Tarpeian altar,  
Bow and adore, and slay a golden heifer to Juno.  
Not many women are worthy to touch the fillets of Ceres,  
Many the ones whose kisses even their fathers recoil from.  
So hang wreaths on your door, adorn the lintel with ivy!  
Will she be satisfied with one man, this piece of perfection?  
Sooner, I think, with one eye. But you keep insisting you've heard of  
One who lives at home on the farm, with a great reputation.  
Well—let her live in some one-horse town as she lives in the coun-  
try,  
Maybe I'll learn to believe in this wonderful rustic virtue,  
But did you never hear about things that happen in mountains,  
Happen in caves? Are Mars and Jupiter utterly senile?

Do you think our arcades can supply a woman worth your devotion?  
Do the rows of our theatres hold one you can love without anguish,  
One you could choose from those tiers? Tuccia wets her pants  
Watching the soft Bathyllus dancing the ballet of Leda.  
Appula sighs or cries as she does in the climax of passion.  
Thymele watches both, the sudden comers and slow ones.  
She's a country girl, but learning her country matters.  
After the curtain goes down, and the theatres close, and the court-  
rooms  
Offer the only show through the humdrum months of the summer,



Then the women, bored, go in for the mask and the thyrsus,  
Not to say Accius' tights. Urbicus gets a big laugh  
Taking off Autonoe; poor Aelia's crazy about him.  
Some of these women pay high for a comic to loosen his codpiece,  
Some like tragedians better, or stifle the voices of tenors.  
What did you think they would do—go read the works of Quintilian?  
You are taking a wife who will make Echion a father  
(He plays the lyre); if not him, it might be the flute player, Ambrose.  
Let's put up the long stands through the narrow streets of the city,  
Drape the doorposts with laurel, happy in celebration  
Over the birth of your noble son, who reveals, in his cradle,  
Features much less like yours than the mug of some gladiator.

Eppia, wife of a senator, followed one of these gentry  
Off to that town by the Nile, the Alexandrian cesspool,  
But even that town condemned our monstrous manners and morals.  
She had no thought of her home, her sister, husband, or country,  
Wickedly left her children in tears, and—this will astound you!—  
Even forsook the games and that marvelous Thespian, Paris.  
Reared in luxury's lap, and pillowed on down of the softest,  
She had no fear of the sea, and no fear for her reputation—  
That's not much to lose, in the minds of cushion-bred ladies.  
So, with a heart unafraid, she faced the roar of the oceans,  
All of the swing of the seas. Consideration of danger,  
If a woman is honest, chills her heart with foreboding,  
She shakes at the knees, hardly can stand, so great is her terror.  
But your bold ones have great nerve for their shameful adventure.  
Tough, to embark on a ship, in case a husband requires it,

The sky keeps whirling around, and the smell of the bilge water's  
dreadful,  
But if it's a lover she follows, her stomach is made of cast iron.  
She would puke on her spouse, but now she feeds with the sailors,  
Wanders all over the ship, has fun in hauling the hand ropes.

What was the youthful charm that Eppia found so enchanting?  
What did she see worth while being labelled "The Gladiatress"?  
This dear boy had begun to shave a long while ago, and one arm,  
Wounded, gave hope of retirement; besides, he was frightfully ugly,  
Scarred by his helmet, a wart on his nose, and his eyes always run-  
ning.

Gladiators, though, look better than any Adonis:  
This is what she preferred to children, country, and sister,  
This to her husband. The sword is what they dote on, these women.  
Once discharged, he would seem of no more use than Veiento.

What do you care for the life of Eppia, and her adventures?  
Look at those peers of the gods, and hear what Claudius suffered.  
Soon as his august wife was sure that her husband was sleeping,  
This imperial whore preferred, to a bed in the palace,  
Some low mattress, put on the hood she wore in the nighttime,  
Sneaked through the streets alone, or with only a single companion,  
Hid her black hair in a blonde-colored wig, and entered a brothel.  
Reek of old sheets, still warm—her cell was reserved for her, empty,  
Held in the name of Lycisca. There she took off her dress,  
Showed her golden tits, and the parts where Britannicus came from,  
Took the customers on, with gestures more than inviting,  
Asked and received her price and had a wonderful evening.  
Then, when the pimp let the girls go home, she sadly departed  
Last of them all to leave, still hot, with a woman's erection,

Tired by her men, but unsatisfied still, her cheeks all discolored,  
Rank with the smell of the lamps, filthy, completely disgusting,  
Perfumed with aroma of whore-house, and home, at last, to her  
pillow.

Why mention philters and spells and brews of virulent poison  
Given a stepson? They do worse things, these lust-ridden women.  
At the bidding of sex, the least of their sins are committed.

“But why does her husband swear Censennia’s the noblest of women?”

She brought him a million, that’s why; for that he should call her  
chaste.

He is not faint from the arrows of love, nor burnt by those torches,  
No—it’s the dowry that brings the fire, that loosens the arrows.  
Liberty at a price! She may beckon and write whom she pleases.  
Rich wives of greedy husbands have all the license of widows.

“Why does Bibula fire Sertorius’ passionate ardor?”

If you want the truth, it’s the face he loves, not the wife.

Let three wrinkles appear, let her skin become flabby and dry,

Let her teeth turn black, or her eyes appear to grow smaller,

He, or his freedman, will tell her, “Pack up your bags and get going.

You are a bore and a pest, forever blowing your nose.

Out of the house and make room for a woman who isn’t a snot-nose!”

Meanwhile, she’s always on fire, a queen, who extracts of her husband

Shepherds, Camerian sheep, and elms for Falernian vineyards.

That’s the least of it, though: she wants all of his houseboys, his  
work gangs.

If he doesn't have things his neighbor has, let him go out and buy them!

In the wintertime, when Jason the Trader is hidden,  
When the booths at the fair hide the murals of sailors in armor,  
Then she picks up huge vessels of crystal, huge jars full of myrrh,  
Comes home wearing a ring, the diamond of Berenice,  
Well-known in legend (which adds to the cost), the stone King  
Agrippa

Gave his incestuous sister in that barbarian country  
Where, on the Sabbath day, the kings will go around barefoot,  
Where the pigs are free to live to a ripe old age.

"Isn't there one from all of these crowds who seems to you worthy?"  
Let her be well-behaved, good-looking, wealthy, and fertile,  
Let her have ancestors' busts and portraits all over her hallways,  
Let her be more intact than all the pre-ravished Sabines,  
Let her be a rare bird, the rarest on earth, a black swan—  
Who could endure a wife endowed with every perfection?  
I would rather, much rather, have a Venusian girl  
Than the noble Cornelia, mother of heroes, those Gracchi,  
Bringing, with all her virtues, those upraised and haughty eyebrows,  
Counting as part of her dowry parades and processions of triumph.  
Spare me your Hannibals, please, and your Syphaxes, conquered in  
camp;  
Get to hell out of here with your Carthage, whole kit and caboodle!

Remember Amphion's prayer: "Spare them Apollo, Diana!  
The children are not to blame; aim the darts at the mother!"  
But the bow twanged on, and Niobe followed her children,  
Followed their sire, to the tomb. Why? Her inordinate pride  
Made her seem, to herself, more noble because of her offspring

Than Latona was, or the Alban sow with her litter.  
Are they worth so much, all the beauty, all the decorum  
Thrown up to you all the time? Excessive pride of the spirit  
Turns the honey to gall; there's simply no pleasure in it,  
All that high and rare, that high and mighty perfection,  
And is there any man such a prey to uxorious worship  
That he does not dread the wife he extols to the heavens,  
Does not hate her at least fourteen hours out of two dozen?

Even some trivial things are most offensive to husbands.  
What stinks worse than the fact that none of them trust their good  
looks

Till they have made themselves Greeks and jabber away in that  
language?

(Though it's a bigger disgrace to speak ungrammatical Latin.)  
All their gossip, their fears, their anger, their joys and their worries,  
Their intimate secrets of soul, they pour out in Greek. I can tell you  
They even go to bed in Greek with their *Zoe* and *Psyche*  
*My Life* and *My Soul*. My word! This might be forgiven in school-  
girls,

But when you're eighty-six, such raptures are hardly becoming  
*Zoe* and *Psyche*—*my life* and *my soul*: you're using in public  
Words that are better kept for under the sheets in the bedroom,  
Words whose effect and intent were better left to your fingers.  
Croon in the smoothest tones that an Elvius ever might gurgle,  
You will flutter no dovecotes; the lines in your face are too ancient.

If you're not going to love your lawfully wedded wife,  
Why get married at all? Why waste the supper, the cookies  
Given the guests, already stuffed to the ears, as the party breaks up?  
Why waste the first night's gift of a golden tray, or a salver

Rich with inscriptions that tell of victories over the Germans?  
If you are simply devoted to one alone, bend your neck,  
Bow to the yoke; no lover finds mercy in any woman.  
Passionate she may be, but she loves to plunder and torment.  
The better you are, as husband and man, the less the advantage  
You will get from a wife. You will never give anyone presents  
If she says, *No!* If she stands in your way, there is nothing, but nothing,

You can purchase or sell. She will regulate even your friendships,  
Slam the door in the face of a lifelong boon companion.  
Gladiators and pimps and masseurs and similar gentry  
Make their wills as they please, but no such luck in your household;  
Your estate must be left to more than one of your rivals.

“Crucify that slave!” “But what has he done to deserve it?  
Who is witness against him? Who has informed on him? Listen—  
No delay’s ever too long in the death of a human being.”  
“A slave is a human being? You fool! All right, he’s done nothing.  
This is my wish, my command; my desire is good enough reason.”  
So she is lord of her spouse. But soon she abandons this kingdom,  
Occupies house after house, and her bridal veil gets pretty ragged,  
Then she comes flying back to the bed she scorned and abandoned,  
Leaving behind her the doors in festal array, and the garlands  
New on the walls, and the branches still green over the lintel.  
So her conquests grow: eight husbands in five Octobers—  
O illustrious feat, worth being carved on her tombstone!

If your mother-in-law is alive, kiss concord farewell.  
She eggs on the wife to rejoice in despoiling the husband  
Stripped to the bone; she gives instructions in answering letters—  
Nothing simple or crude now!—sent by her daughter’s seducers.

She is the one who deceives the guards at your door, or else bribes them.

Your wife may be perfectly well, but she loves to call in the doctor,  
Haul off the blankets—too heavy!—and meanwhile the lover, in  
hiding,

Silent, can hardly wait, and wonders how long he can stand it.

What do you think?—that a mother can give her daughter instruction,

Teach her decent ways, when there's no decency in her?

Not a chance in the world. Like mother, like daughter. The old one  
Knows where advantage lies, and bawdry profits from whoredom.

Almost no day in court goes by without cases which women  
Prompt, one way or another, plaintiff, defendant, no matter.  
They draw up the briefs themselves, prepare the indictments,  
Ready to draft or dictate all of the speeches of counsel.

Who does not know of the blankets that women drape over their  
shoulders

After athletic workouts, the pastes they use for their rubdowns?  
Who has not seen the dummies of wood they slash at and batter  
Whether with swords or with spears, going through all the maneuvers?

These are the girls who blast on the trumpets in honor of Flora.  
Or, it may be, they have deeper designs, and are really preparing  
For the arena itself. How can a woman be decent  
Sticking her head in a helmet, denying the sex she was born with?  
Manly feats they adore, but they wouldn't want to be men,  
Poor weak things (they think), how little they really enjoy it!  
What a great honor it is for a husband to see, at an auction  
Where his wife's effects are up for sale, belts, shinguards,

Arm-protectors and plumes! Or a different kind of a skirmish,  
Maybe, has taken her fancy, one where she won't need a girdle,  
Won't want a thing on her legs, not even so much as a stocking.  
These are the women who sweat in the thinnest, most flimsy of garments;

Even the sheerest silks are too hot for their delicate bodies.  
Hear her grunt and groan as she works at it, parrying, thrusting;  
See her neck bent down under the weight of her helmet;  
Look at the rolls of bandage and tape, so her legs look like tree trunks,

Then have a laugh for yourself, after the practice is over,  
Armor and weapons put down, and she squats as she uses the vessel.  
Ah, degenerate girls from the line of our praetors and consuls,  
Tell us, whom have you seen got up in any such fashion,  
Panting and sweating like this? No gladiator's wench,  
No tough strip-tease broad would ever so much as attempt it.

The bed holds more than a bride; you lie with bicker and quarrel  
Always, all night long, and sleep is the last thing you get there.  
There she can really throw her weight around, like a tigress  
Robbed of her young; or else, to atone for her own bad conscience,  
She fakes the outraged sigh, and hates the boys whom her husband  
Has, or she says he has, or sheds tears over a mistress  
Purely fictitious, of course. Her tears come down like the raindrops,  
With plenty more where they came from, ready to flow at her bidding.

Abject slug that you are, you think this proves that she loves you.  
Aren't you pleased with yourself, as your lips go seeking those lashes  
Wet with her pitiful tears? But what if you happened to open  
The drawers of her desk, and found those notes, those fervent epistles,



Saved by your green-eyed wife, the hypocritical cheater?  
You may catch her in bed with a slave or a knight. What happens?  
All she can do in that case is invoke the art of Quintilian,  
"Master of Rhetoric, help! Come to my aid, I implore you."  
"Sorry," Quintilian replies, "I'm stuck; get yourself out of this one."  
This does not bother her much; her explanation is ready.  
"Long ago," she says, "it was understood between us  
Perfectly well, you could do what you pleased, and no double stand-  
ard  
Kept me from having my fun. So howl as much as you want to,  
I am human, too." Can you beat their nerve when you catch them?  
That's when their very guilt supplies them anger and spirit.

Where, you ask, do they come from, such monsters as these? In the  
old days

Latin women were chaste by dint of their lowly fortunes.  
Toil and short hours for sleep kept cottages free from contagion,  
Hands were hard from working the wool, and husbands were watch-  
ing,  
Standing to arms at the Colline Gate, and the shadow of Hannibal's  
looming.

Now we suffer the evils of long peace. Luxury hatches  
Terrors worse than the wars, avenging a world beaten down.  
Every crime is here, and every lust, as they have been  
Since the day, long since, when Roman poverty perished.  
Over our seven hills, from that day on, they came pouring,  
The rabble and rout of the East, Sybaris, Rhodes, Miletus,  
Yes, and Tarentum too, garlanded, drunken, shameless.  
Dirty money it was that first imported among us  
Foreign vice and our times broke down with overindulgence.  
Riches are flabby, soft. And what does Venus care for

When she is drunk? She can't tell one end of a thing from another,  
Gulping big oysters down at midnight, making the unguents  
Foam in the unmixed wine, and drinking out of a conch-horn  
While the walls spin round, and the table starts in dancing,  
And the glow of the lamps is blurred by double their number.

How can you ask what Tullia means by her sneer or her sniff when  
she passes  
Modesty's ancient altar? One Moor-girl whispers to another,  
Out of their litters they climb, and empty their bladders; the squirt-  
ing  
Splashes the goddess's image. *It's my turn now! Let's play horsy!*  
So in the light of the moon they are moved to the nastiest limits,  
Then they go home, and you, on the way to greet your great friends  
Early next day, soak your shoes in your wife's stale puddles of urine.

There's the Good Goddess, whose rites and mysteries scarcely are  
secrets,  
Not when the flute music stirs the pelvis, and here they come sweep-  
ing,  
Carried away by the horns and the wine, Priapus's maenads,  
Tossing their manes and howling, craving, in absolute frenzy,  
The beast with two backs, the gymnastics of lust, and their limbs  
fairly oozing  
Passion's unmixed wine. Saufeia, in competition,  
Wins the prize from them all, the slave girls who work for the pimps.  
She swings a looser hip, but Medullina, in action,  
Looses a juicier flow. So victory goes to the lady  
Whose feats are as good as her birthright. This is no game, no  
pretense;  
All of the actions here would make a Priapus of Priam,

Bring a burning heat to the cold old balls of a Nestor.  
Now they cannot wait any more, they are utterly female,  
Crying again and again, from every cranny and corner,  
‘Now is the proper time, now, now! Let the men come in!’  
Maybe one gigolo is asleep; then send for another,  
Let him put on a robe or a hood, but come in a hurry.  
If there’s nobody else, a slave will do; if no slaves  
Are on hand, procure a water carrier, quickly;  
If no human male is available, maybe a burro  
Might, in time of need, supply what they want. How disgraceful!  
Would that our ancient rites, at least in their public aspect,  
Might be conducted without such evil, such blatant corruption.  
But there’s not a Moor in town, nor, for that matter, a Hindoo  
Who doesn’t know too well what lute player, said to be female,  
Came with a tool twice the size of the Anti-Catos of Caesar  
Into a place where a stud-mouse should scuttle away embarrassed,  
Where even pictures of males are supposed to be covered with fig  
leaves.

Who ever sneered at the gods in the good old days? Who found  
Numa  
A figure of fun, with his earthenware bowls, his black pots, or the  
brittle  
Saucers of Vatican clay? But nowadays, where’s the altar  
Lacking its lute-playing fraud, its Clodius dressed like a woman?  
Their appetites all are the same, no matter what class they have  
come from;  
High or low, their lusts are alike; the barefooted woman  
Treading the dark flagstone, the one tall Syrians carry  
Litter-borne aloft—which is the better one? Neither!

In order to look at the games, Ogulnia hires herself clothes,  
 Hires attendants, a chair, cushions, girl friends, a nursemaid,  
 Also a blonde to run errands. All this is pretty expensive,  
 But if there's anything left of the family silver, she gives it,  
 The very last jug or jar in the house, to some athletic smoothie.  
 Many women like these are by no means well off. Does that matter?  
 None of them limits herself to the bounds that her poverty sets her.  
 None of them has any shame, any sense of decency. Sometimes  
 Men, at least, look ahead, are provident. *Go to the ant,*  
*Sluggard, consider her ways!* They fear cold, therefore, and hunger,  
 But an extravagant woman has no idea whatsoever  
 That accounts can be overdrawn; she thinks that money is some-  
 thing  
 Like the mythical bird resurrected from its own ashes,  
 Something that grows on trees: why figure the cost of a pleasure?

In every house you will find a Professor of Obscene Matters.  
 Look at his right hand shake! He promises all kinds of doings.  
 Perverts all of them are, degraded, completely disgusting,  
 Yet they may spoil the bread, come to unholy communion;  
 The vessels are ordered washed, not smashed to bits as they should  
 be  
 After a Colocynth drinks, or a bearded Chelydon swallows.  
 So the man who conducts a training school for the wrestlers  
 Operates a house that is cleaner than yours is, more decent,  
 Seeing that his, at least, keeps the types away from each other,  
 Won't let the net-swishers join the ones with the spots on their  
 tunics,  
 Won't let the naked and armed keep their gear in a locker together.  
 The quarters reserved for the queers are the most remote from the  
 others

Both in the wrestling school and the jail, the gym and the prison.  
But your wife makes you share the cup you drink from with creatures  
Such as these, with whom a faded old whore from a graveyard  
Would disdain to quaff wines of most exquisite vintage.

These are the seers they consult when they marry, or break off a  
marriage,

These are the ones with whom they relieve their spirits of boredom,  
These are the ones who teach them movements of buttocks and  
pelvis

Or anything else they may know. But you cannot trust them completely!

Better suspect the one who darkens his lashes with lampblack,  
Puts on a saffron robe, and a woman's ribbons and hair net.  
The softer his voice may be, and the more he rests his right hand  
On his right hipbone and waggles his elbow a little,  
The more this may all be put on, and in bed he's perfectly normal,  
A champion, really, there, when he's put off the mask of a Thais,  
Becoming the man with three—Wait! whom does he think he is  
fooling?

Put on this show for others, not me. I'd be willing to wager  
He is really a man, completely a man. Do you doubt it,  
Or shall I summon the maids and hear their detailed confession?  
I know what you will say, and what all your old friends will advise  
you—

"Put a lock on the door: keep her in." But the question arises,  
*Who will be guarding the guards?* They know enough to be silent,  
They get paid in kind, and your wife has the cunning to know this,  
Making her first misplays with the spies you have ordered to watch  
her.

There are some women who find unmanly eunuchs delightful,

Love the soft kisses of those who are hopeless of growing a beard—  
No need here for precautions. But oh, the height of their pleasure  
Comes when they happen on one who was fully mature when they  
took him

Off for the doctors to work on, and his quill was darkened already,  
So what the surgeon removes hurts no one's game but the barber's  
Once the members have grown, filled out, begun to weigh some-  
thing,

But if you get young boys, they really are wretchedly weakened,  
Ashamed of their empty bag and the chick-peas that once were con-  
tained there.

This one, though, deprived, by his lady's will, of his manhood,  
After his teens, is a noteworthy sight, outstanding Priapus  
On his way to the baths. So, let him sleep with his lady,  
But never let yourself think that he's impotent under the covers.

If she delights in song, she will make the professional singers  
Come at her bidding; she holds their instruments in her hands,  
While her sardonyx rings flash as her fingers are moving  
Up and down the scale, and she holds the pick, and it quivers  
As it used to do in the hand of the soft Hedymeles.

So she fondles it, finds it a joy and a consolation,  
Gives it more than one kiss by way of endearing indulgence.  
There was a lady descended, I think, from Appian nobles,  
Yet she went with her wine and meal to Janus and Vesta  
Asking them, goddess and god, whether Pollio, playing the lute,  
Had any chance for the wreath of oak in the competition  
Called the Capitol Games. What more could she possibly do  
If her husband were sick, or the doctors anxious and gloomy  
Over the case of her son? Yet there she stood by the altar  
Thinking it no disgrace to veil her head for this lutester.

There she stood, repeating the ritual over and over,  
All in due form, and turned pale as the lamb was being cut open.  
Janus, most ancient of gods, Janus, most reverend father,  
Tell me, can people like these expect any answers from Heaven?  
Gods must have little to do, I guess, and suffer from boredom.  
While one lady consults you about some ridiculous comic,  
While another one seeks your favor for some tragic ham,  
What will the soothsayer get but varicose veins for his patience?

Better to let her sing than be running all over the city,  
Bold as a man, attending the meetings of men, with her husband  
One of the throng, while she holds forth, hard-faced and dry-  
breasted,  
Talking with all the High Brass. She knows the classified secrets  
Of the whole wide world, what the Russians and Chinese are up to,  
Knows, furthermore, what goes on between stepmother and stepson,  
Who is in love with whom, which swordsman is all the rage,  
Who made the widow pregnant, and in what month; and she also  
Knows what endearments they use, women in bed with their lovers,  
Also what methods they use. She sees, before any others,  
The comet that threatens the king, of Parthia, say, or Armenia.  
She is the first to hear, at the city gates, all the rumors  
Recently come to town and she has been known to invent them,  
Saying Niphates is pouring in flood over cities and people—  
(This is a mountain, of course, but she has it mixed up with a  
river)—  
Over the fields, overwhelming the earth: she chatters the story  
Into any ear she encounters at any street corner.

This is no harder to bear than the way she treats her poor neighbors  
Cutting them down with the lash, no matter how they entreat her.

If she is sound asleep, and a dog awakes her by barking,  
“Hurry up with the whip!” she cries. And who is the victim?  
Oh, the poor dog, of course; but his turn comes after his master’s.  
She is a menace to meet and worse than disaster to look at.  
She goes to the baths at night, at night she demands her canteens,  
Mess kits, oil flasks, all the gear of her camping equipment.  
There she loves to sweat, with the din and bustle about her.  
When her arms are tired from lifting the weights or the dumbbells,  
Then it is time for the man with the oil to give her a rubdown.  
Don’t think that’s all he does—his fingers are certainly clever,  
Knowing where they can go, and how they can work up a climax.  
Meanwhile her pitiful guests are waiting, waiting forever,  
So it would seem, half-dead with sleep, exhausted and hungry.  
Finally here she comes, all red in the face, dry-throated,  
Thirsty enough to swig at least a couple of gallons  
With a pint or two for a chaser, something to make her real hungry.  
She cannot hold this down; the floor is presently flooded,  
Streams run over the marble; a reek of Falerian wine  
Rises strong in the air as the golden vessel runs over.  
So she drinks, or pukes, as a long snake does when he tumbles  
Into a cask or a vat. Her husband feels the same impulse,  
Closes his eyes and succeeds in keeping his bile down, but barely.

Even worse is the one who has scarcely sat down at the table  
When she starts in on books, with praise for Virgil and pardon  
For the way Dido died; she makes comparisons, placing  
Virgil one side of the scales, and counterweights him with Homer.  
Critics surrender, professors are lost; the whole crowd is silent.  
No one can get in a word edgewise, not even a lawyer,  
No, nor an auctioneer, nor even another woman,  
Such is the force of her words, the syllables pouring in torrents



Making a din like that when pots and kettles are rattled  
In an eclipse of the moon. No need of trumpets or cymbals,  
All by herself she can make all of the noise that is needed.  
What a philosopher, too, with her definitions of morals!  
What she ought to do, since she wants to seem eloquent, learned,  
Is to tuck up her skirts to her knees and bring to Sylvanus  
(Women may not do this) a little pig as an offering,  
Or go to the penny baths, the ones the philosophers frequent,  
The only ones they can afford, along with the general public.  
Postumus, my good friend, don't let the wife of your bosom  
Ever acquire the style of an orator, whirling the sentence,  
Heaving the enthymeme, or the undistributed middle.  
Don't let her know too much about historical matters,  
Let there be some things in books she does not understand. How I  
    hate them,  
Women who always go back to the pages of Palaemon's grammar,  
Keeping all of the rules, and are pedants enough to be quoting  
Verses I never heard. If she has some friend from the country  
Let her correct her speech! Is this a business for men?  
Husbands should be allowed their solecisms in comfort!

There's nothing a woman won't do, nothing she thinks is disgraceful  
With the green gems at her neck, or pearls distending her ear lobes.  
Nothing is worse to endure than your Mrs. Richbitch, whose visage  
Is padded and plastered with dough, in the most ridiculous manner.  
Furthermore, she reeks of unguents, so God help her husband  
With his wretched face stunk up with these, smeared by her lipstick  
To her lovers she comes with her skin washed clean. But at home  
Why does she need to look pretty? Nard is assumed for the lover,  
For the lover she buys all the Arabian perfumes.  
It takes her some time to strip down to her face, removing the layers

One by one, till at last she is recognizable, almost,  
Then she uses a lotion, she-asses' milk; she'd need herds  
Of these creatures to keep her supplied on her northernmost jour-  
neys.

But when she's given herself the treatment in full, from the ground  
base

Through the last layer of mud pack, from the first wash to a poultice,  
What lies under all this—a human face, or an ulcer?

It might be well worth your while to have a good look at these ladies,  
How they keep busy all day. But consider the nighttime before this:  
If the husband has slept with his back to the lady, tough luck  
For the woman who cards the wool, tough luck for the tiring women,  
Tough luck for the man with the litter: the sleep of the husband  
will cost them

Plenty of grief, the rod for one, the strap for another,  
The lash for a third: some women save money by paying their flog-  
gers

Not by the job but the year—an annual basis is cheaper.  
Whipping's no bother at all: she can smear her face while it hap-  
pens,

Listen to female friends, or study the flounce of a garment.  
Crack goes the whip! She reads the Daily News, every column.  
Crack goes the whip! But at last they grow tired, and she growls,  
"Oh, get out!"

For one day, at least, the investigation is over.

No Sicilian court is more unjust than her household  
If she has made a decision, and wants to appear more becoming  
Than her usual style, in a hurry to get to the gardens  
Where her somebody waits, or to get to the temple of Isis

(Brothel would be more like it), her hair is put up by a handmaid, Psecas by name, with her own hair a mess, and naked of shoulder, Naked of breasts. "Why won't this curl lie flat?" And the cowhide Takes it out on the maid because of the lack of a cowlick. Why was that Psecas' fault? Or how in the world could she help it If the lady found the shape of her own nose disgusting? Another maid needs both hands to comb her hair and to coil it, Then there's one more on the staff, who used to work for her mother, Now more or less retired, but first to express her opinion By seniority's right; let the younger or awkwarder follow Taking the floor in due course, as if we had here great questions Of church or of state, of life or death, not merely the problem Of the build-up of beauty, hair skyscraper-high on the head. Look at her from the front—that must be Andromache, surely! But from the rear she seems a good deal more like a midget. What can she do if the luck of the draw has assigned her dimensions,  
Given her half-pint size, which even high heels can't correct,  
So that she has to jump straight up in the air for her kisses?  
Meanwhile, she takes no thought for her husband, or what she must cost him,  
More like a neighbor than wife, and intimate only in hating  
Both his friends and his slaves, and in running up bills.

Here they come,

The choirs of Bellona the wild, of Cybele, and one big eunuch  
Whose countenance calls for awe from lesser obscene devotees,  
Seeing he once, long ago, cut off his own balls with a sharp shell.  
Now the noisy rout gives way, and the drums defer,  
As, with a Phrygian's headdress veiling his commoner's features,  
In a solemn voice, he warns her, Beware of September,

Beware of the hurricanes, unless she has made an oblation,  
First, of a hundred eggs, or given him some old garments  
The color of vine leaves in autumn, by way of preventive magic  
Whereby what danger there is, however appalling or sudden,  
Passes into the clothes, a full year's expiation.  
On a winter day she will go down to the Tiber,  
Break the morning ice, plunge three times into the current,  
Wash her fearful head where the waves crest high, and then, trembling,  
Naked, with bleeding knees, crawl out on the field of Mars.  
If white Io commands, she will go to the borders of Egypt,  
Fetch from the sun-warmed Nile water, and sprinkle the temple  
Sacred to Isis, that stands near the polling booths of the city.  
She has no doubt that she's called by the actual voice of the goddess—  
What a fine soul and mind for the gods to talk with by nighttime!—  
Here the highest of praise is due to the dog-headed god  
Who with his linen-clad, bald-headed throng of attendants  
Runs along and laughs at the grief of the people, Anubis,  
Intercessor for wives who pollute the sheets with embraces  
On the holiest days and must pay for this violation.  
Heavy payment due, if ever the silver serpent  
Seems to have nodded his head! But tears, the rehearsal of murmurs,  
Prove that pardon will come, a big goose will insure absolution,  
Or a little wafer suffice to win over Osiris.

Well, this fellow has gone. The next to come is a Jewess  
Leaving her basket and hay, soliciting alms, all a-tremble,  
Claiming she knows the laws of Jerusalem. This High Priestess  
Has to live under a tree, but she knows all the secrets of Heaven.  
She, too, will fill her palm, but not too full; a few coppers

Purchase, where Jews are concerned, fulfillment of dreams and fancies.

A Commagenian seer or Armenian fortuneteller  
Will promise you tender young love or bequests that are handsome  
After inspecting the lungs of a dove or the crop of a chicken  
Or the entrails of a puppy or maybe even a child's.  
He will do some things for the sake of turning informer,  
But the Chaldean seers are apparently more to be trusted.  
What those astrologers say appears to come straight from the  
sources

Hammon inspires, since Delphi is dumb, and a darkness  
Falls on the human race when it comes to knowing the future.  
Not the least of these is one who was often an exile,  
By whose friendship (for sale) and equally venal divining  
That great citizen fell, the emperor dreaded by Otho.  
Fellows like these are believed if they've been in some far-off prison,  
Shackled hand and foot: if he hasn't a prison record,  
Then he has no renown, but a sentence to one of the islands,  
A narrow escape from death, procures him a reputation.  
These are the ones your wife, like Tanaquil, truly an expert,  
Goes to consult: how soon will her mother die of the jaundice?  
(She asked about your last hour long ago.) And when will she bury  
Her sister, her uncles? How long will her present lover survive her?  
So far, she can't understand the gloomy portents of Saturn  
Or beneath what star Venus reveals herself joyous,  
Which are the losing months, and which the seasons for winners.  
Don't forget to duck when you meet with one of these women  
Clutching no amber beads to keep her palms from perspiring,  
But a calendar worn till she's hardly able to read it.  
She is an expert herself, giving, not given, advices.

If her husband goes to the wars or returns to his homeland,  
She will not be at his side if the runes of Thrasyllus forbid it.  
If she wants to take a short ride out of the city,  
She has to look up in her book to find out what hour is propitious.  
If she has an itch when she rubs an eye, she will never  
Think of applying salve till the horoscope's been consulted.  
If she lies sick in bed, she will take no food till she figures  
What is the right time to eat, as per Petosiris' directions.

If she is not too well off, she will travel around the Circus  
Where they draw lots; she will find a phrenologist there, or a palm-  
ist

(Not so expensive perhaps, but at least the turnover's frequent),  
But your rich women hire imported Phrygian augurs,  
Said to be most sage in the ways of the constellations,  
Or those wise old men who purify ground struck by lightning.  
Poverty learns its fates at the Circus, or Servian rampart;  
Women whose shoulders are bare, wearing the long gold necklace,  
Go to the posts of the Dolphin or Egg, the Blue or the Green, to  
discover

Whether to jilt the barkeep, or marry the old-clothes peddler.

Yet these women at least endure the perils of childbirth,  
Suffer the nuisance of nursing—but when did you ever discover  
Labor pains in a golden bed? There are potent prescriptions,  
Fine professional skill, to be hired for inducing abortions,  
Killing mankind in the womb. Rejoice, unfortunate husband,  
Give her the dose yourself, whatever it is; never let her  
Carry till quickening time, or go on to full term and deliver  
Something whose hue would seem to prove you a blackamoor father,  
Sire of an off-color heir you'd prefer not to meet in the daylight.

I will not mention the children set out to die from exposure,  
Hopes and prayers deceived, the pools and the filthy waters  
Whence our ministers come, our dancing priests, the deluded  
Bearers of noble names, as often as not poor bastards,  
Seeing that Fortune, by night, is shameless and smiles on the children,  
Fondles them all, and folds them to her, and then, for amusement,  
Lets them go to the homes of the great, and loves them, and, smiling,  
Gives them her blessing, her best, and sets them above all the others.

Here comes a quack with magical spells to peddle a wife, and another  
Selling Thessalian charms whose effect on the mind of a husband  
Proves so strong his wife can paddle his ass with a slipper,  
Chump that he is, but perhaps just as well, if he cannot remember  
Deeds of the day before, with this darkness of spirit upon him.  
Things could be worse: he might be like Nero's uncle, for instance,  
Stark and staring mad, from the potion Caesonia mixed him.  
What won't a woman do, if an empress sets the example?  
All things went up in flames, and all things came down in ruins  
Just as if Juno herself had driven her husband to madness.  
Agrippa, it seems, was not so bad with her mushrooms  
Telling one silly and drooling old man to descend to the heavens,  
But Caesonia's draft brought fire and the sword and the rack,  
Mixed the blood of the knights and the blood of the senate together,  
Such was the power of that brew, the power of one murderous woman.

Women, of course, are right to hate the sons of a rival;  
No one should cavil at that, it's a custom of ancient tradition,

Killing a stepson, I mean, and perfectly normal and proper.  
But you adopted sons, with more than ample possessions,  
Take my advice, look out for your lives, trust none of the dishes.  
Those potpies are black with poisons put there by mother.  
Let somebody else taste first of whatever she offers,  
Pass your tutor the cup, and don't be surprised if he shudders.

Of course I am making this up, and my Muse is assuming, too  
grandly,  
Tragedy's buskin and mask. Do you think so? think that my trespass  
Steps beyond limits and bounds of precedent? think I am crazy,  
Crazy, or drunk, and mouthing a theme, in Sophocles' manner,  
Foreign to Latin skies and Rutulian mountain and woodland?  
Would that I were so wrong! But here is Pontia crying  
"I did it, I confess, I gave my children the poison,  
Did it with my own hands, and nothing secret about it!"  
"Two at one sitting, you viper, you fiend, you vilest of women,  
Two at one sitting?" "Of course, and seven if there had been seven."

Let us believe what they tell us about Medea and Procne;  
No use denying the fact. Those women were monsters of daring  
In their own day, but their crimes were not committed for money.  
It is not so strange when women find their incentive  
To their evil deeds in a passionate anger that bears them  
Down like a rock torn loose from the crumbling side of a mountain  
When the ground gives way, and a chasm splits from the hillside.  
The woman I cannot stand is the calculating woman  
Committing her crimes in cold blood. Our wives consider Alcester  
Taking her husband's fate upon her; given the freedom,  
They'd like a husband to die to save the life of their lap dog.  
Every morning, in Rome, you'll meet the daughters of Belus,



More than one Eriphyle, and almost every apartment  
Is Clytemnestra's address. In one respect only they differ—  
She used a two-edged axe, our girls toad-poison or mushroom.  
Still, it might be well if they practiced, a little, with weapons.  
Possibly one of these days the husbands will take some precautions,  
Making themselves immune in the manner of Mithridates.

## THE SEVENTH SATIRE

### *On poets, pedagogues, and poverty*

WHATEVER hope we have, whatever inducement to study  
Rests on Caesar alone, the Muses' only respecter  
In these sorrowful days, when poets of high reputation,  
In order to make a few cents, think of a bath concession  
In some little town like Gabii, think of a bakeshop  
Here in Rome, or perhaps try crying the sales at an auction.  
None too great a disgrace, after all; any one of the Muses,  
Starving, could hardly be blamed for leaving Helicon's fountains  
In hot haste for a job in the auction rooms of the city,  
More or less content with Machaera's trade and his profits,  
Bawling, "Going! Gone!" over wine casks, bookcases, tripods,  
Copies of plays, for example the *Thebes* or *Tereus* of Faustus,

Paccius' masterpiece, the one about Minyas' daughter  
Changed to a bat. A better career, to be sure, than appearing  
In some police-court case, claiming you saw what you did not.  
Leave all that to our new-made knights, the ex-slaves from Asia,  
Cappadocia, Gaul, with the chalk marks still on their ankles.

Nobody, from now on, no bard who has nibbled the laurel,  
No one who ever bound words to melodious measures  
Ever will have to submit to employment unworthy his calling.  
On with your work, young men! Your prince, your patron, is watch-  
ing,  
Urging you to produce material worth his indulgence.  
If you have any idea of waiting for some other fellow  
To come to your aid, Telesinus, and any such hope keeps you filling  
Foolscap, ream upon ream, you would be better off if you ordered  
Plenty of kindling wood, and presented your product to Vulcan  
Or put the volumes away in a cupboard, a feast for the bookworms.  
Break your pen, poor wretch; destroy those epics of battles  
Costing you sleepless nights, the lofty hymns of the garret,  
The hope of the scraggy bust and the stringy garland of ivy.  
That is the best you can hope for, no more. Our rich men are misers  
Willing to give three cheers, like boys admiring a peacock  
(This doesn't cost them a cent), for the eloquent verse of the poets.  
Meanwhile your prime of life, your hardihood, your endurance  
Wherewith you might have been a soldier or sailor or farmer  
Goes to its ebb, and the spirit lags, and a worn-out old age,  
Eloquent, but in rags, hates itself and its art.

Don't forsake the shrine where the Muses dwell, and Apollo,  
In any hope you can find a private patron to help you.  
He writes verses himself, of course, and will grant you that Homer,

After a thousand years, has a following somewhat greater.  
Don't assume from this that he has any sympathy in him  
For the bards of today. Here is how he will work it.  
If the desire for fame leads you to give a recital,  
He will find you a hall, or a house all falling to pieces,  
Out of the way, with the front door barred like the gate of a sieged town.

He will supply a clique, his freedmen along the aisles,  
But he won't give you a cent to hire the benches they sit on,  
Not a cent for the chairs arranged on the lecture platform,  
Not a cent for the front-row seats you send back to the owner  
After the program ends. But still we're persistent, we poets,  
Ploughing our furrows in dust or the salty sand of the seashore.  
No use to try to give up; the noose of a hopeless infection,  
Writer's itch, has us all by the neck till we're old and sick-hearted.

But your distinguished bard, whose talent is far from the common,  
Who speaks to the point, avoiding the trite and the long-drawn-out,  
Your genuine poet—I'm sorry I can't show you one, I am only  
Sure he exists—is made with a spirit untroubled by anguish,  
Unembittered, serene, fond of the woodlands, and worthy  
To drink at the Muses' fount. But Poverty isn't a singer—  
How can you sing in the grot when you haven't a cent in your pockets?

How can you flourish the wand when you're hungry and thirsty and gloomy

All of the night and all of the day? *Rejoice!* Horace told us.

This is all very well—but Horace had a full belly.

Where can talent find a place except where the spirit

Truly cares for song, and no ambivalent feelings

Trouble the heart whose lord is Apollo, or Dionysus?

Not from some cheap little mind concerned with the cost of a  
blanket,  
But from a lofty soul arise those visions of godhead,  
Chariots, riders and steeds, and the Fury dashing at Turnus.  
Virgil, without at least one slave, and a decent apartment,  
Never could bring to life the terrible blast of her trumpet  
Or the snakes of her hair. Imagine a bald-headed Fury!  
Is it fair to suppose Rubrenus Lappa, for instance,  
Hard at work on his play, the *Atreus*, ever will tower  
Over the ancient composers of tragedy? Not bloody likely,  
Not while he has to hock his cloak and his dishes for paper.  
Numitor—now there's a patron! The poor unfortunate fellow  
Has nothing to give to a friend, but only to send to his mistress.  
He could scrape up enough, it seems, to feed a tame lion—  
Everybody knows a lion eats less than a poet.

Lucan may lie content with his fame, content in those gardens  
Where his statues rise, but is glory ever sufficient,  
Glory alone, for men like Serranus or Saleius Bassus?  
All the people turn out in droves, and hear, with rejoicing,  
Statius' beautiful voice, as he keeps his promise and reads them  
Lines from his epic on Thebes. There's not a dry seat in the house.  
Statius, however, will starve unless he can manage to peddle  
His *Agave*, thus far unpublished, but suitable, maybe, for Paris,  
Paris, our patron saint, Paris the pantomimist.  
He has the power to secure you title and rank in the army  
Honorary, of course, and a golden ring on your finger  
Proving you've served six months. Paris the actor will give you  
More than a nobleman does; so why hang around in their hallways?  
One leading lady (male) appoints our prefects, another  
Nominates our tribunes, Pelopea or Philomela.

Do not envy the poet supplied, through the stage, with a living.  
Who, in these days, will there be to play to role of Maecenas,  
Patron of art, the friend of Propertius, Horace, and Virgil?  
That was the time when genius was given its due, and a poet  
Found it well worth while to work through the holiday revels.

Are you so much better off, O writer of history? Surely  
You waste more time and more oil and thousands of pages of paper  
Costing a fortune: still, the laws of the craft are demanding,  
What with footnotes and research, cross references and index.  
But how does the harvest pay off? What profit in all of this delv-  
ing?

What historian gets as much as a clerk in a courtroom?  
"Oh, but they're lazy slobs, who delight in the shade and the chaise  
longue."

How about lawyers, then, who bustle about in the courtroom  
Loaded with briefs? How they do sound off, with their creditors  
watching!

Not to mention the act they put on if they've gotten a nudge  
From some prospect, whose case appears exceedingly doubtful.  
What big lies they puff out as they heave and pant like a bellows  
Drooling all over their chins and halfway down to their navels!  
Yet, if you'd like the facts of their income, a hundred lawyers  
Hardly make as much as that Red race driver, The Lizard.  
The leaders are seated, and you are rising to argue, like Ajax,  
Only a lot more pale, for a client whose freedom's in question,  
In the court of some clodhopping judge. Bust a gut, you poor  
sucker,

What will you get? Worn out, and the major reward for your labors  
Green palm leaves on the garret stairs, and perhaps, in addition,  
A shrivelled-up ham, a can of sardines, some veteran onions

That would feed a Moor for a month, bad wine from up Tiber, five  
bottles.

After four briefs, you get one gold piece, all but the fraction  
Which, as you know, accrues to a few of your fee-splitting colleagues.  
If he comes from the ranks of the nobles, any attorney  
Gets the maximum fee, though ours is a better performance.  
Still he has in his courtyard four horses hauling a chariot  
All of bronze, and himself riding on one of them, fiercely  
Flapping a bending spear, half-blind, or should we say cockeyed?  
That's how Pedo goes broke, and Matho is always in trouble.  
Such will be the end of Tongilius, haunting the baths  
With his oil flask of rhinoceros horn and his filthy retainers,  
Maedians, weighted down under the poles of his litter  
As through the forum he rides to purchase slave boys or silver,  
Red and white agate, a country estate. That Tyrian purple,  
Worn on a lawyer's back, brings him both credit and clients.  
This is what pays off, to live in continual uproar  
Always beyond one's means; Rome puts no limit on spending.

Trust in eloquence, then? Cicero would not be given  
Even a minimum fee, if he wore no ring on his finger.  
If a man's going to law, the first thing he has to consider  
Is, do you have eight slaves, a litter, companions in togas  
Walking ahead as you go? When Paulus pleaded his cases,  
He wore a ring he had hired, a spectacular gem of sardonyx,  
That's why his fees were more than those of attorneys like Gallus.  
Eloquence seldom is found when a counselor's wardrobe is shabby.  
When can a Basilus move the court with the tears of a mother?  
Who would listen to him, no matter how well he was speaking?  
Better be off to Gaul, or to Africa, mother of lawyers,  
If you suppose that your tongue is going to earn you a living.

Or do you teach declamation? What iron nerve must be needed  
While your class, by the score, knocks off tyrannical monarchs.  
Each schoolboy, in turn, gets up, and, standing, delivers  
What he's just read sitting down, in the most monotonous singsong.  
This is the kind of rehash that kills unfortunate masters.  
What kind of case do we have? What's the best side to develop?  
What refutation will come from the speech of the opposition?  
That's what they all want to know, but no one is willing to pay  
for.

"Pay you? But what have I learned?"—it's always the fault of the  
teacher

If his scholars aren't thrilled to the core of their moronic beings  
Every sixth day when they bore us to death with the villain from  
Carthage,

What he debates in his mind, whether to capture the city  
After his triumph at Cannae, or lead his cohorts with caution,  
Soaked to the skin as they are from war's grim tempest and deluge.  
Name what amount you please—I'd be perfectly willing to pay it  
If the boys' fathers would hear their orations as often as I do.  
That's the common cry from our teachers, almost by the dozens,  
As they go to court for their fees, as they must, forgetting the  
speeches

Dealing with Tarquin the Proud, with Medea, or possibly Jason,  
Or the one about drugs that restore the vision to blind men.  
So, my advice would be, if any one's willing to listen,  
Live a different life, come down from rhetoric's shadow  
Into the sun of the games, get one fight, take your payment in pea-  
nuts,

Then announce your retirement, go into some other profession.  
Try to find out what it costs to hire an instructor in music  
For the smart set's sons; then tear up your *How to Teach Speaking*!



Your great lord spends thousands, or more than that, on his bath-rooms,

And even more fanciful sums on places to dine when it's rainy.  
Don't think he'll wait for the sun, or let his ponies get muddy.  
Better to ride where the gilded hoofs will always shine brightly.  
Somewhere he has a banqueting hall with Numidian columns  
Catching the winter sun. How much did this cost? What a question!  
He can still afford a cook and a table setter,  
Specialists, both, in their art. Well then, how much for Quintilian?  
(Nothing a father won't pay when it comes to a son's education.)  
Five or ten bucks. "But Quintilian," you say, "appears to have plenty!"

Never mind; let it go. Rules always have their exceptions.

If you are lucky, you're brave, you're wise, you're noble, you're handsome,

You can wear black shoes with the senatorial crescent.  
If you are lucky, you hurl the javelin farther than any,  
Make the greatest orations, and even with laryngitis  
Sing like an angel. The stars must be in the proper conjunction—  
Nothing else matters as much—at the time when, red as a lobster,  
Fresh from your mother's womb, you first give out with your squalling.

Luck may be kind: you will be a consul instead of a teacher.

Luck may change her mind: you're a teacher again, not a consul.

Bassus and Cicero rose from nowhere and nothing. What brought them

High, save the power of the stars, and the secret wonders of Fortune?  
Fortune makes kings of slaves and gives the captive a triumph,  
Yet the fortunate man is very much harder to come on  
Than a white crow. And it often turns out that the chairs of profes-  
sors

Prove a delusion and snare. The case of Thrasymachus proves it;  
And there have been others, no doubt—for instance, the teacher in  
Athens

Whom his citizens blessed with the goblet of ice-cold hemlock.  
Gods, may the earth be soft and light on the shades of our fathers,  
The crocus bloom, and spring be eternal over their ashes.  
They were men who revered a teacher as much as a parent.  
Achilles, fully grown up, feared the rod and respected  
Chiron the Centaur, who taught him song in his native mountains.  
But what happens today? More than one teacher, like Rufus,  
“Cicero of the Rhone,” is beaten up by his pupils.  
Who pays the learned Palaemon, or Celadus, what they deserve?  
Yet, of the little they get, the scholar’s nitwit attendant  
Has to take his cut, and so does the steward disburser.  
Might as well give up, Palaemon. A blanket seller  
Knocks a little off for a white sale during the winter.  
Just so you get some pay, however little, for sitting  
All night long in some dump no blacksmith would ever put up with,  
In some dump that would choke the meanest wool-carder’s appren-  
tice.

Just so you get some pay for inhaling the reek of the lamps,  
One for each boy in the class, with their Horace completely discol-  
ored

And the Virgilian pages grimy and sooty with lampblack.  
Just so you get some pay—but for that it takes a court order.

But, you parents, impose the strictest rules on the teacher.  
Insist that his usage of words is precise, that he knows all the classics  
Like his own fingers and toes, that he’s learned in history, also.  
If he’s on his way to the baths, don’t let him go till he tells you  
Who was Anchises’ nurse, or where Anchemolus’s stepmother

Came from, and what was her name, and what was the age of  
    Acestes,  
Also how many casks of wine he bestowed on the Trojans.  
Make him mold their young minds, as a man models faces from  
    beeswax,  
Keeping them under his thumb, and be looked upon as a father,  
Not let them play dirty tricks, or develop the nastier habits.  
It is no easy task to keep your eye on the students,  
Watching the hands and the eyes of the impudent mischievous  
    devils.  
“That’s your job,” they say, and your pay, at the end of a twelve-  
    month,  
Equals a jockey’s fee if he’s ridden only one winner.

## THE EIGHTH SATIRE

### *Against base nobles*

WHAT good are family trees? Oh, Ponticus, what's the advantage  
In your ancient blood, in having the family statues  
Placed all about in your halls, and more or less going to pieces,  
Aemilius in his car, Curius crumbling, Corvinus  
Lacking a shoulder, and Galba worse off, with no nose and no ears?  
What is the profit with men like these in a branch of the household,  
Dictators, Masters of Horse, dim with the dust of the ages?  
Where does the profit lie, if your life is devoted to evil  
Almost before their eyes? What good are the statues of heroes  
If you spend all night throwing dice, and not until daybreak  
Start for your bed, at an hour when your warrior ancestors ordered  
Camp to be moved and the march to go forward? Here is a fellow

Sprung from Hercules' line, a Fabius—how does he dare be  
Proud of the conqueror's title bestowed, or of the Great Altar,  
Hercules' own, if he's silly, and avaricious, and softer  
Than a Euganean lamb? The chests of his forebears were hairy;  
Look at him, though, with his butt all smoothed by Catanian pum-  
ice!

How dare he be proud, a buyer of poison, convicted,  
Bringing disgrace on the house, and a statue the law orders broken.  
Statues may fill your halls from one end to the other, but Virtue,  
Virtue alone is proof of nobility. Act like a Cossus,  
Paulus or Drusus; behave like them; defer to their statues  
More than those of your house, and even when you are consul  
Honor them more than your rank. Your primary obligation  
Lies in goodness of soul. Are you really deserving of honor,  
Holding fast to the just in word and deed? I proclaim you  
Nobleman, then. All hail, whatever your birth! The Egyptians  
Cry, when Osiris is born, "We have found him; rejoice!" So our peo-  
ple

Cheer when they find, for once, a citizen rare and distinguished.  
True nobility lies in more than a name and a title.

We call somebody's dwarf an *Atlas*; his black boy is *Swansdown*,  
We label some ugly lopsided girl *Europa*; and mongrels,  
Mangy and worthless, the kind that try to lick oil from dry vessels,  
We call *Lion*, or *Tiger*, or *Pard*, or whatever roars loudest.

So, beware lest your title is given in any such spirit,  
Lest "The Victor of Crete" means Crete's where you took such a  
beating.

For whom is my warning meant? For you, Rubellius Blandus.  
You are all swollen up because you're descended from Drusus.  
What is your actual claim to be considered a noble?

Is it getting yourself conceived from the shining line of Iulus,  
Not by some wench who spins for hire at the base of the windy  
walls?

"You are the dregs," you say, "the scum of the earth, the rabble.  
There's not a man of you all who can show where his father was lit-  
tered,

But I come down from the kings!" Long life to you, Sire, and long  
pleasure

In your illustrious birth! And yet, from among the plebeians,  
From this common herd, you will find the eloquent Roman  
Able to plead the cause of the barbarous ignorant noble.  
From the common folk will arise the solver of riddles,  
Breaker of legal knots; from them will emerge the young soldier  
Active in arms, on the march with the eagles to distant Euphrates,  
While you sit at home, a Hermes, armless and legless,  
What a comedown from the kings! Over Hermes you have one ad-  
vantage:

He has a marble head, while yours, though empty, is living.

Tell me, son of the Trojans: in the case of dumb beasts, does it  
matter

How they are bred, if they're strong? We praise a race horse for  
running,

Burning speed, and the roar of the crowd as he comes home a win-  
ner.

He is the thoroughbred, no matter what pasture he fed on,  
Who can get the job done, and the others dusty behind him.  
But if he never wins, let the dray or the glue factory claim him,  
Though his sire may have been Man of War, Native Dancer, Nas-  
rullah.

What does the race track care for pedigreed phantoms and shadows?

All those heavy of foot might as well be pounding the treadmill,  
Making the wheels go round, galling their necks with the collar,  
Changing masters, obeying, and always cheaper and cheaper.  
So, if you want our respect for your worth and not your possessions,  
Give us something your own, some personal proof of your title  
Going beyond the claims of our past and present allegiance  
To those ancestors in whose debt you are fully indentured.

This is enough for the youth puffed up, according to rumor,  
From the fact that he claims to be a relation of Nero's.  
In that walk of life, a decent feeling for others  
Seldom, if ever, is found. Therefore, my Ponticus, do not  
Covet praise for your birth, yourself contributing nothing.  
Shaky indeed is the prop if you lean on the glory of others;  
The house will come tumbling down, the columns shatter in ruins.  
Low on the ground, the vine longs for the elm it deserted.  
Be a good soldier, be good to your ward, be a person of honor.  
If you are summoned to court, in a case uncertain and doubtful,  
Even though Phalaris threatens and brings up his bull to suborn  
you,  
Tell no lie, believe that the worst sin of all is preferring  
Life to honor; don't lose, for life's sake, your reasons for living.  
If a man is worthy of death, he is dead, though he banquets on  
oysters,  
Though he bathes in a tub that reeks with the perfumes of Cosmos.

When at last you leave to go out to govern your province,  
Limit your anger and greed; pity our destitute allies,  
Whose poor bones you see sucked dry of their pith and their marrow.  
Have respect for the law, respect the Senate's instruction,

Keep in mind the rewards of the god, the blast of the lightning  
Hurled by the Senate's arm against the Cilician pirates.  
Yet what good is all this, if one robber replaces another?  
All the poor native can do is peddle what rags he has left,  
Keep his mouth shut, and hope he won't lose his passage money  
Whether to Rome or to Hell.

It was different once. In the old days  
What our allies lost would cost them sorrow and groaning  
Over their wounds, to be sure, but then they were flourishing cities,  
They had only been beaten, not put to the last desolation.  
Every home was well-stocked, and the men had plenty of money,  
Spartan cloaks, Coan silks, Parrhasian paintings, and statues,  
The workmanship of the best, Polyclitus, Phidias, Myron.  
Hardly a table was set without some silver by Mentor.  
Then Dolabella came, Antony, infamous Verres,  
All of them loading tall ships with private spoil, and more trophies  
Taken in peace than in war. Today, if you capture a farmhouse,  
You get a few yoke of oxen, a few brood mares, and one stud-horse.  
As for the household gods, there might be one statue worth stealing,  
One little god from one little shrine to make do, as a makeshift.  
Possibly you despise unwarlike Rhodes, perfumed Corinth.  
You are perfectly right, of course; what harm can be done you  
By young men who shave not only their shins but their armpits?  
But keep away from Spain, it's rugged there; keep away from  
Gaul and the Yugoslav coast; don't bother those African gleaners  
Stuffing the gut of the city whose care is the stage and the Circus.  
Come to think of it, though, they have little left to be taken.  
Marius, not long since, stripped them right down to their loincloths.  
Here's the first rule: don't harm men who have nothing but courage.  
Stripped of their silver and gold, they still rely on their weapons,  
Shields and helmets and swords and javelins of the spirit.



What I have just set forth is no mere slogan, believe me.  
This is the absolute truth; I am reading the leaves of the Sibyl.  
If your whole staff consists of men you can trust, if no longhair  
Has your decisions for sale, if your wife is above suspicion,  
Not like a harpy with talons, ready to pounce on the money  
Whether in country or town, then you can trust your descent  
All the way back to Picus, or if lofty names please you better,  
Call yourself son of the Giants, the Titans, or even Prometheus.  
But if ambition and lust seize on you, carry you headlong,  
If you break the rods on the bloody backs of our allies,  
If you're in love with axes worn dull, and headsmen exhausted,  
Then your family pride begins to rise up and reproach you  
Throwing the light of the torch on deeds too shameful to mention.  
Every vice of the soul calls obloquy down on the sinner  
In direct ratio to his title and reputation.  
What do I care for the temples your grandfather built, where your  
father  
Has a triumphal statue, if that's the place you resort to  
For your forging of records? How does the family virtue  
Matter to me, if you sneak out at night with your countenance hid-  
den  
Under a Gallic hood, on some adulterous mission?

Driving at breakneck speed past the ashes and bones of his fathers  
Whirls Lateranus the fat, a mule skinner once, now a consul,  
Setting the brake on the wheel in his old professional manner.  
This is at night, to be sure, but the moon looks on, and the planets  
Strain their wondering eyes. When his term of office is over,  
Lateranus won't mind taking his whip in broad daylight,  
Greeting old friends with a flick of the lash, untying the hay bales  
With his own hands, giving out the barley and oats to his horses.

Meanwhile, though he performs the rites in the manner of Numa,  
Slaying oxen and lambs, even at Jove's high altar,  
He swears by no other god than Hippona, mistress of horseflesh  
And those faces that hang on the smelly walls of the tack room.  
When he decides to go to some tavern that never closes,  
On his way he is met by a perfumed Syrophoenician,  
Coming up at a run, to hail him as lord and master  
With all the airs of a host, and with him a woman, Cyane,  
Skirts hiked up to her knees, and her bottle ready to peddle.

"Young men will sow their wild oats," I can hear some indulgent old  
fellow

Making excuses, "We acted the same way when we were boys."  
Maybe you did, but you managed to stop, and were foolish no  
longer.

Let the time be brief for bold and shameful behavior;  
Cut off delinquent days when you first cut your juvenile whiskers.  
Boys rate a certain amount of indulgence, but this Lateranus,  
Running around to the grogshops under their awnings of linen,  
Surely was old enough for the wars, for guarding the rivers  
In Armenian lands or Syrian, Danube or Rhine.  
He was old enough to protect the person of Nero.  
Send to Ostia, Caesar; there you will find your lieutenant  
If you have the search conducted in some big cookshop.  
There you will find him, sprawled out with gangsters of every de-  
scription,  
Runaway slaves and sailors and thieves and coffin-makers and butch-  
ers,  
Or a eunuch priest on his back in the midst of his cymbals.  
Freedom for all! And all things in common, the cup and the table,  
Not to mention the bed. Ah, Ponticus, how would you treat him,

This kind of slave? I am sure you would pack him off to some jail-house,  
Out in the countryside, to work with others in field gangs.  
But you pardon yourselves, you gentry, Trojan-descended,  
Give yourselves license for acts that the working classes would blush at.

I find it hard to produce examples so vile and disgusting  
There's not a worse left unmentioned. When all of his future was squandered  
Damasippus hired out to play the Loud Ghost, of Catullus.  
Lentulus took the role of the highwayman born to be hanged;  
There was typecasting for you! Don't be too soft on the people,  
They are partly to blame as they sit there, brazenfaced, staring,  
Watching patricians clown, the sons of a Fabius barefoot,  
Numa's descendants—what fun!—clouting each other with slapsticks.

How cheap can you get? And who cares? Yet no tyrannical Nero  
Makes them sell themselves at the games of His Highness the praetor.  
But imagine you did have to choose: on the one hand, death; on the other,  
Playing a part on the stage, a clown or a cuckolded husband,  
Which is the nobler way out? Is death such an absolute horror?  
Still, when the emperor turns to playing a fiddle, no wonder  
Nobles act on the stage. Below this level there's nothing.  
Ah, but there is! The games! Go there for the ultimate scandal,  
Looking at Gracchus who fights, but not with the arms of a swordsman,  
Not with a dagger and shield (he hates and despises such weapons),  
Nor does a helmet hide his face. What he holds is a trident,

What he hurls is a net, and he misses, of course, and we see him  
Look up at the seats, then run for his life, all around the arena,  
Easy for all to know and identify. Look at his tunic,  
Golden cord and fringe, and that queer conspicuous armguard!  
So the professional fighter who meets this kind of a Gracchus  
Suffers the worst disgrace; a wound, at least, is an honor.

If the people could vote, and were free in their right of election,  
How could they fail to choose a Seneca over a Nero?  
More than one sack, one asp, one ape, one dog, would be needed  
If his parricides earned the punishments due to their number.  
Agamemnon's son, Orestes, murdered his mother.  
That was a different case, with the gods giving orders for vengeance  
Over a father slain while drunk. But even Orestes  
Never polluted himself by cutting the throat of his sister,  
Never murdered his wife nor poisoned cups for his cousins,  
Never sang on the stage, nor attempted original epics!  
Nothing in all the reign of this cruel and merciless tyrant,  
Nothing he ever did was more deserving of vengeance.  
Hail, our noble prince, and his works of art! What a leader,  
Happy to pimp for the foreign stage, and with horrible singing  
Earn the laurel wreath, or a Grecian garland of parsley!  
Deck his ancestors' busts with the trophies won by his howling,  
Place at Domitius' feet the sweeping gown of Thyestes,  
Melanippa's mask, Antigone's robe; for a trophy  
Hang the fiddle or harp high on the marble colossus.

Who had nobler sires than Catiline had, or Cethegus?  
Yet here were two who planned attacks by night, burning houses,  
Setting temples on fire, or hoping to. These were no Romans,

Sons, more likely, of Gauls from the West, the kind that wear breeches.

(What their garb should have been was the shirt, pitch-lined for the torture.)

But our consul, on guard, beat down their banners, a consul  
Born of lowly blood, a man from humble Arpinum  
Newly come to Rome, of equestrian rank, and he saved us  
Setting his garrisons, armed, at every point in the city,  
Watchful on every hill, while the frightened citizens trembled.  
So, within our walls, a civilian, clad in a toga,  
Gained renown as great as Octavian won at Philippi  
Or the Actian shore, his sword blood-red from the battles.  
Rome, a free Rome then, called Cicero Sire of His Country.  
There was another man from that little town of Arpinum,  
One who used to work for hire, in the hills of the Volscians,  
Tired at the haies of another man's plough, and later a soldier  
On whose pate, with a crash, came down the centurion's cudgel  
If his shovel and pick were slow in the toil of the trenches.  
This was the man, later on, who defended the terrified city  
Facing the Teuton hordes and the heights of utter disaster.  
So, when the ravens flew down, after the carnage was over—  
Bodies as big as these were something new for their feasting—  
Catulus, nobly born, had a share, to be sure, in the triumph,  
But the real acclaim was for Marius, son of the people.  
Decius the father, Decius the son, plebeians and heroes,  
Offered themselves to the gods below, to the earth-mother goddess,  
Vowing their lives to save the hosts of legions and allies,  
All that Latin youth, and so made an offering, dearer  
To their mother and gods than all the ranks of the rescued.

It was the son of a slave, the last good king of our seven,

Who won the robe and the rods, the diadem of Quirinus.  
But the consul's sons were unbarring the gates of the city  
For the tyrants' return from exile, acting like traitors  
When they should have been bold, heroic for freedom,  
Marvels of courage, inspired like Cloelia, swimming the Tiber,  
The man at the bridge, or the man who put his hand in the embers.  
It was a slave who revealed the secret plot to the senate  
A slave who deserved to be mourned by the decent matrons in  
public,  
While those evil sons took the scourge and the axes, and justice  
Passed from the tyrant's whim to the lawful cause of the city.

It would be better, I think, if you sprang from the loins of Thersites  
Then in your life went on to become an Achilles, and worthy  
Of those arms Vulcan made; better so, than the other way round,  
A son of Achilles in fact, but conducting yourself like Thersites.  
You can go back a long way, tracing your roster of forebears,  
Yet, in the end, you will find you came from a shameful asylum.  
Your first ancestor, whoever he was, was a shepherd,  
Or if not that, something worse, which perhaps I had better not  
mention.



## THE NINTH SATIRE

### *On the griefs of a career man*

NAEVOLUS, I want to know why you always look glum when you  
meet me,  
Making an uglier face than Marsyas, flayed by Apollo.  
Why does your face have the look that Ravola's had when they  
caught him,  
The muff-diver, getting his beard all wet in Rhodope's you-know?  
If a slave takes a lick at a tart, we always give him a licking.  
You look more cast down than Pollio Crepereius,  
The fellow who goes around prepared to pay triple interest  
And never finds fools he can take. Why these wrinkles, all of a sudden?  
Surely you once were contented enough, a knight by indulgence,



The life of the party, whose wit had a sting, whose stories were naughty.

Now this is all in reverse: your looks are grim, and your head holds  
A bush of dry hair, your complexion has lost what it used to be  
given,

The glow, the gleam, that came from the packs of hot Bruttian bird-  
lime.

Also, your legs are a mess, with the hair sprouting forth. What's the  
matter?

Why are you thin as a sick old man with the chills and the fever  
Every fourth day? Could it be your symptoms are psychosomatic?

Sorrow and joy can affect the face as well as the spirit.

You seem to have changed your ways, to head in another direction.

Not long ago, I recall, you haunted the temple of Isis,

Ganymede's shrine in the temple of Peace, or Cybele's secret

Place on the Palatine Hill, or the fanes where Ceres was worshipped

Any such temple, it seemed, was full of available women

For a coxswain like you, and though you said little about it,

If the supply was short, you could always make do with their hus-  
bands.

"This kind of life brings a profit to many; to me it brings nothing,

Maybe a greasy cloak to throw over my toga, some product

Off a Gallic loom, ill-woven, disgustingly colored,

Or maybe a little piece of silver, inferior metal.

The fates are the rulers of men, and the parts hidden under our gar-  
ments

Have their lot as well. Unless the stars are propitious,

Measurements out of this world—phenomenal!—prove to be useless

Even though Virro has seen us stripped and drools at the prospect,

Even though love letters come, continually coaxing and pleading.

What's that phrase from the Greek—A *man is drawn to a fairy*?  
What in the world can be worse than the fairy who's stingy about it?  
'Oh, but I paid you once, and I paid you twice, and I paid you  
Ever so many times.' He's figured it out, or he hopes so,  
Using every device. . . . Does he think this job is so easy,  
Shoving it in to the point where it meets with yesterday's dinner?  
Ploughing the master's field pays more than ploughing his person.  
Ah, but he used to think himself such a delicate fellow,  
Such a pretty boy, a Ganymede, worthy of Heaven,  
Won't he ever be nice to his lowly pleasers? Won't he  
Ever be prepared to pay for his gratification?  
Look at him! Isn't he sweet? We send him balls on his birthday,  
Amber, I mean, for his hands to hold to keep them from sweating,  
Or a green parasol, some humid day in the springtime,  
Or, on the Matrons' Day, a lot of presents in secret  
For him to dote upon as he lies in his chaise longue, beaming.  
Tell me, you sparrow: for whom do you keep those Apulian moun-  
tains,  
All those estates, those fields it tires the hawks to fly over?  
You have storerooms filled with wines from Trifolian vineyards  
Where the slopes look down on Cumae or Gaurus, deserted.  
Who seals up more casks, and who is less likely to drain them?  
Would it cost you so much to parcel out a few acres  
To some client whose loins have been worn out in your service?  
Why not bequeathe to me that little brat from the country  
With his mother, their cottage, the puppy he likes to play with,  
Rather than pass him on to your cymbal-walloping crony?  
'Oh, you're not nice to ask,' says he. But who does the asking,  
I, or the rent I must pay? I, or my single slave boy?  
Single, yes, like the eye of Polyphemus the giant,  
Single, but not for long, I shall have to purchase another,

Then both will have to be fed; and what shall I do in the winter  
When the north wind howls, and their feet are cold, and they  
shiver?

What am I going to say—*Hold on, await the cicadas?*

“Well, suppose you do disavow some obligations,  
What do you think this is worth, that unless you had me for a client,  
Loyal, devoted, and true, your wife would still be a virgin?  
Surely you know how often you asked for my help, and how many  
Ways you suggested, how hard (excuse me!) you were in entreating.  
So, more than once, when she fled your embrace, she was caught in  
another’s,

Mine, whose else? when she’d broken her bonds, and was ready for  
signing

A contract with some other man. It took all night, but I saved her  
While you wept outside. I appeal to the bed as a witness,  
I appeal to you, who must have noticed its squeaking,  
Not to mention her cries. Ah, many’s the time when a marriage,  
On the point of a break, is saved by a lover’s arrival.

Why do you wiggle and shift? What’s first, what’s last, does it  
matter?

Ungrateful and treacherous man, is it nothing to you, is it nothing  
That your little son and daughter descend from my kindness?  
You bring them up as your own; you delight in putting on record  
Names and dates that prove you a man. And so you’re a father.  
Hang up the wreaths on your door, for I have given you something  
Counter to common talk. You have the rights of a parent.  
You are entitled to be an inheritor in good standing,  
With no discount to the state, and maybe a nice little windfall  
All through my doing, and I can get you more if you say so.  
Why not let me complete the tally, and give you three children?”

Naevolus, I must admit, you have just ground for complaining:  
What does he say in reply?

“He simply pays no attention,  
Looks for another ass, the kind with two legs, for his pleasure.  
Don't let this go any farther; it's all confidential, between us.  
One of these pumice-smoothed boys is a deadly foe, if he hates you.  
He is furious now, can't stand me for knowing his secrets,  
Thinks I betray all I know. He'd readily take up a dagger,  
Crack my skull with a blackjack, burn up my house with his torches.  
Don't think him worthy of scorn, not altogether. The fact is  
He can afford to pay any price if he wants to buy poison.  
Keep all this to yourself, like the Council of Ares in Athens.”

Ah, Corydon, Corydon, do you think a rich man can have secrets?  
Maybe his slaves will keep still, but his asses will talk, and his hound-  
dogs,

His doorposts be tattletales, and even his columns of marble.  
Shut the windows, pull the curtains, fasten the doors tight,  
Douse the light, throw everyone out, let none sleep near by,  
Still, what he does at the time the cock crows twice, by daylight,  
Even before, will be known to the nearest innkeeper; also  
He will have heard all the lies of his chief cooks and bottle washers.  
That's the way they get even, a form of revenge for their beatings.  
Some one will always be there, drunk at the crossroads, to find you,  
Whether you like it or not, to bend your poor ear with his babble.  
Those are the ones you should ask, instead of me, to be silent.  
What a chance! They would rather have fun by betraying a secret  
Than get stinking drunk on Falernian, sweeter if stolen,  
Swilling at least as much as Saufeia conducting a service.  
For a goodly life there are many excellent reasons,

But the greatest of these is to rise above servants' gossip.  
The tongue is the slave's worst part. And yet, worse still is the master  
Who cannot, or will not, be free of those whose spirits he nurtures  
With his own money and bread.

“Good advice, but a little too common.  
What about my particular case, with so much time wasted,  
Disappointment, dismay? For our life is most short and unhappy,  
Fading away like a flower, and even while we are drinking,  
Calling for garlands and girls and perfumes, old age steals upon us,  
Always, before we know.”

Don't worry; there'll always be fairies  
While these seven hills stand. They will come from all sides, some in  
    wagons,  
Some in boats, and you'll see them scratching their heads with one  
    finger.  
You have plenty to hope for; meanwhile, keep chewing your spear-  
    mint.

“Tell this to luckier men. As for me, my fates are contented  
If my belly can live on what my pecker provides it.  
Poor little household gods, whom I invoke with a tiny  
Pinch of incense or meal, or offer diminutive garlands,  
When will I make a good shot to keep my old age from the poor-  
    house?  
I am not asking so much, a thousand dollars, plus interest,  
Principal guaranteed, and a few little dishes of silver,  
Not engraved, but the sort a Puritan censor would banish,  
Also a couple of slaves, good husky Bulgarians, able  
To carry me off at my whim to any seat in the Circus.

Then I'd like an engraver, a little stooped, and a painter  
Who could quickly dash off any number of suitable portraits.  
That would be all for a poor man like me, and more than sufficient.  
What a pitiful prayer, and one I have really no hope of,  
Since when Fortune is called on to do things for me, she is always  
Stuffing her ears with wax from the ship that carried Ulysses  
Safe past the Sirens' song, a luckier hero than I am."



## THE TENTH SATIRE

### *On the vanity of human wishes*

IN ALL the lands that reach from Gibraltar to the Euphrates  
Few indeed are the men who can tell a curse from a blessing.  
Few remove the mist of error—and when does our reason  
Govern our hope or our fear? In your own case, what did you ever  
Plan with the omens so good that you never thereafter repented  
Making the try, or never repented the wish come true?  
The gods are not difficult, really: all you need do is to ask them,  
They would as soon as not bring down your household in ruins.  
In peace, in war, in both, we ask for the things that will hurt us.  
Many a man has found his flood of eloquence fatal,  
Many have perished who trusted too much in the strength of their  
    muscles,



Even more have been choked off by the money they hoarded,  
By the estates whose expanse exceeded the normal condition  
By as much as a whale from Britain surpasses a dolphin.  
So, in the bad old days, because of the orders of Nero,  
Longinus lost his home, and Seneca, grown too wealthy,  
Saw his gardens placed under lock and key by the troopers.  
Nero's orders, again, brought down on the Laterani  
Vengeance and death, with a guard storming the gates of their palace.

There's one place that a soldier seldom invades; that's a garret.  
If you are on the road by night, and carrying with you  
Only an item or two of your less elaborate silver,  
You fear a sword or a club or a reed that stirs in the moonlight,  
But your poor man sings a song in the face of the robber.

Almost the first of prayers, best known in all of the temples,  
Is the one for wealth: let riches increase, so our strongbox  
May be the biggest in town. But aconite never is offered  
Out of earthenware cups; the time to be fearful of poison  
Comes when you reach for the goblet encrusted with jewels, when  
wine

Glows red in the bowl of gold. Praise, therefore, each of the sages,  
The one who laughed and the one who wept, stepping over the  
threshold.

Easy, for any man, is the censure of merciless laughter.  
Remarkable, though, that the eyes of the other one never ran dry.  
Democritus used to shake his sides with contemptuous mirth  
Though in the cities he knew there were no such things as our togas  
Bordered or striped with the purple, palanquins, the fasces, tribu-  
nals.

What if he had seen the lofty car, with a praetor

Standing high as he rode through the dust and roar of the Circus,  
Dressed in the tunic of Jove, with palms, and over his shoulder  
A toga, Tyrian-dyed, with as many folds as a curtain?  
Don't forget the crown, so heavy it can't be supported  
By one single neck, but a sweating slave has to hold it  
Riding beside his lord, in the selfsame car with his master.  
(This serves to keep the consul from too much pride of position.)  
Then there's the bird that springs from the ivory staff, and on one  
side  
The blowers of horns, on the other the white-robed clients in long  
rows,  
Whose dutiful friendship was won by the meal-ticket safe in their  
pockets.  
Democritus, long ago, found ample occasion for laughter  
No matter whom he met, and we can learn from his wisdom  
That the greatest men, who set the greatest examples,  
Sometimes are born in a land where the air is thick, and the people,  
Muttonheads that they are, even thicker. He laughed at their troubles,  
Laughed at their joys and tears, and if Fortune threatened, he told  
her,  
*Take a jump in the lake*, and pointed the way with his finger.

Silly, or downright disastrous, are all the things that we pray for,  
Weighting the knees of the gods with the words in the wax of our  
tablets.  
Power and consequent envy hurl some men down to their ruin;  
They are sunk by the long and illustrious list of their honors.  
Their statues come down, they follow the rope, the axe cuts to pieces  
The wheels of the car and the legs of the horses (who didn't deserve  
it).

Now the fires hiss hot—in the roar of bellows and furnace  
Burns the head adored by the people. The mighty Sejanus  
Makes a crackling sound, and out of that countenance, second,  
Not so long ago, in the whole wide world, there are fashioned  
Wine jars, frying pans, basins, and platters, and piss pots.  
Laurel your doors and lead the great chalked bull to Jove's altar!  
Sejanus gets the hook, he is dragged along. What a picture!  
Everybody is glad. "Believe me, I never could stand him.  
What a puss he had! But what were the charges against him?  
Who were the witnesses, the informant? How did they prove it?"  
"Nothing like that at all: the only thing was a letter,  
Rather wordy and long; it came from Capri." "That's all right, then.  
That's all I wanted to know."

And what are the people of Remus  
Doing now? What they always do; they are following fortune,  
Hating her victims, as always. Had Nortia favored Sejanus,  
Had the leader's old age been unexpectedly stricken,  
This same mob would have hailed as Augustus the man now  
doomed.

Ever since the time their votes were a drug on the market,  
The people don't give a damn any more. Once they bestowed  
Legions, the symbols of power, all things, but now they are cautious,  
Playing it safe, and now there are only two things that they ask for,  
Bread and the games.

"I hear that many are going to get it."  
"Not a doubt in the world. They've got a big furnace all ready."  
"Bruttidius looked a bit pale when I met him beside Mars' altar.  
The beaten Ajax, I fear, suspects he's been poorly defended.  
Now he'll get even for that." "All right, let's go, in a hurry—  
While he lies on the bank, let's give Caesar's foeman a few kicks."  
"Yes, and be sure the slaves can see, so that all must admit it."

We don't want to be dragged to court at the end of a halter."  
That was how they talked, at the time, about their Sejanus.  
That was the way the crowd muttered and grumbled about him.  
So—would you like to have been Sejanus, popular, courted,  
Having as much as he had, appointing men to high office,  
Giving others command of the legions, renowned as protector  
Of that Prince who's perched on the narrow ledges of Capri  
With his Eastern seers and fortunetellers around him?  
You would certainly like the spears, the horsemen, the cohorts,  
The camp all your own. Why not? Even those with no craving for  
murder  
Wish that they had the power. But what good would it be if it  
brought you  
Risk in equal amount? Would you rather be robed like Sejanus,  
Dragged along the streets like him, or would it be better  
Taking charge of affairs in some little town like Fidenae,  
Mayor of Gabii, or Inspector of Weights at Ulubrae?  
So you acknowledge Sejanus did not know what to pray for,  
Seeking excessive renown, excessive wealth, and preparing,  
All the time, a tower whose stories soared to the heaven,  
Whence he had farther to fall, a longer plunge to his ruin.  
What was it overthrew the Crassuses, Pompeys, and that man  
Under whose lash the people were made to bow in obeisance?  
What brought them down? High rank, sought after with never a  
scruple,  
And ambitious prayers, granted by gods who were evil.  
Few are the kings who descend without wounds or murder to Pluto.  
Few tyrants die a dry death.

As for your poor little scholar

Paying his penny tuition, with one slave guarding his schoolbag,  
Even he begins to hope and to pray, in vacation,

For Demosthenes' fame, or Cicero's eloquent prowess.  
Yet this talent of theirs brought both of them tumbling down,  
Eloquence proving a flood, a torrent that overwhelmed them.  
Cicero's head and hands were cut off through his genius for speaking.

No little stammerer's blood ever stained the rostra with crimson.  
"Fortunate natal day for Rome, me being her consul":  
If he had only spoken like that in all his orations,  
He could have laughed to scorn the swords of Antony. Better  
Write such ridiculous lines than the scathing Second Philippic.  
Terrible, too, was the end of Demosthenes, marvel of Athens  
For his power to arouse or control the moods of the people.  
Under an evil star he was born, and the gods were against him  
From the time he was sent from the forge, the coal, and the anvil  
By his father, to learn the arts of the rhetorician.

All the spoils of war, the trophies fastened on tree trunks,  
Breastplate, the strap that hangs from the broken helmet, the wagon  
Whose yoke is cut off from its pole, the staff of a trireme conquered,  
A captive, depressed, on an arch of triumph—all these are considered  
Far above normal good things. To this height each general, Roman,  
Greek, or barbarian, strains; for this he endures toil and danger,  
Thirsting far more for renown than ever he thirsted for virtue.  
Whose embrace would enfold Virtue without her rewards?  
Yet, more often than once, a country has come to her ruin  
Through the desire of a few, their lust for praise, for a title  
That might cling to the stones that stand guard over their ashes,  
Stones that the barren fig tree has crude enough vigor to shatter,  
Seeing that even tombs have a day and a doom allotted.

Weigh out Hannibal's dust. How many pounds does he come to,  
 This greatest commander of all? Here was a leader, too mighty  
 Even for Africa's reach, from the Moorish sea to the desert,  
 From the steaming Nile to the elephant-teeming jungles.  
 Spain is under his sway, he leaps the Pyrenees mountains;  
 Nature bars his advance with the ice of the Alpine glaciers  
 But he splits the rocks with his vinegar, cracks mountains open,  
 Now he holds Italy, but still he intends to press onward.  
 "Nothing is won," he says, "until the soldiers of Carthage  
 Smash the gates of Rome and plant their flags in the forum."  
 What a face he had! What a wonderful theme for a picture,  
 A general with one eye riding an elephant—splendid!  
 What is the end? Alas for glory! He also is conquered,  
 Runs off to exile, and there, a truly magnificent client,  
 Sits in the court of a king, awaits his Bithynian pleasure.  
 What brought an end to the life that once confounded all nations?  
 Not a sword, not a stone, not a spear. The avenger of Cannae,  
 All those seas of blood, was a little ring that held poison.  
 Run, then, over the Alps, behave like an absolute madman,  
 To end up the schoolboys' delight, the theme of their declamations.

One world, so it seemed, was too little for Alexander.  
 That unfortunate youth raged at its borders—too narrow,  
 More confining than Gyara's rocks, or tiny Seriphos.  
 Yet when he came to the town with the walls of brick, he was happy  
 With a sarcophagus' bonds. Death, and death only, announces  
 What little things are the bodies of men. Herodotus tells us  
 How the ships once sailed through Mount Athos, with other inven-  
 tions,  
 Not to say outright lies, of Greek historians, namely,  
 How that sea was paved with warships, turned into a highway

For the chariot wheels of Persia, and how, at his feasting,  
Xerxes made rivers fail and drank up the streams in their courses.  
Sostratus tells us the same, flapping damp pinions, or armpits.  
The monarch who more than once had treated the winds to a flogging,

Such as they never endured in the prison where Aeolus held them,  
What kind of shape was he in, returning from Salamis, Xerxes,  
Xerxes the king, who bound earth-shaking Poseidon in shackles,  
Thinking himself no doubt very kind to have spared him a beating?  
Which of the gods could serve this kind of master? But tell me  
What kind of shape was he in coming back? With one single vessel,  
Through blood-reddened waves, and the prow held back by the  
corpses,

Such was his faring, the penalty paid for the glory he cherished.

“Give us many years, O Jupiter, give us long life!”

This is all you ask, in the bloom of health or in sickness.

But a long old age is full of continual evils:

Look, first of all, at the face, unshapely, foul, and disgusting,

Unlike its former self, a hide, not a skin, and chopfallen;

Look at the wrinkles too, like those which a mother baboon

Carves on her face in the dark shade of Numidian jungles.

Young people vary a lot; one, you will find, is more handsome,

One more robust, but the old are all alike, and they look it—

Doddering voices and limbs, bald heads, running noses, like children's,

Munching their bread, poor old things, with gums that are utterly toothless,

Such a disgusting sight to themselves, their wives, and their children.

They are even despised by Cossus the legacy-hunter.

Wine is no good any more, food everlastingly tasteless.  
As for the act of love, that long ago was forgotten,  
Or if you should try, though you play with it all night long,  
You will never rise, you cannot, to meet the occasion.  
This is a state of things to pray for, this impotent sickness?  
When desire outruns performance, who can be happy?

Now face up to the loss of another sense, that of hearing.  
Who can delight in the song, however famous the singer,  
Were it Seleucus himself at the harp, or the concord of players  
Dressed in their golden robes? And to make it worse, it won't matter  
Where your seat may be in the theatre; all of the brasses,  
Blaring together, can scarcely be heard. If your slave wants to tell  
you  
What time of day it is, or announce that a visitor's coming,  
He has to bawl in your ear.

And the blood gets thin in the body  
Warned by fever alone, and diseases, forming in column,  
March and countermarch. If you ask me their names, I should find  
them

Harder by far to complete than the number of Oppia's lovers,  
How many patients the doctor Themison killed in one autumn,  
How many partners Basilus cheats, or how many pupils  
Hamillus perverts in his school, how many wards Hirus swindles,  
How many men tall Maura exhausts in a day's occupation.  
I could sooner add up the villas owned by the barber  
I used to go to when young. One man is weak in the shoulder,  
One's sacroiliac hurts; another suffers lumbago;  
One has lost both eyes and envies the fellow with one left;  
One's pale lips take morsels of food from another man's fingers;  
One who used to open jaws wide at the sight of his dinner



Now can only gape like the chick of a swallow whose mother  
Flies to fill his mouth. But worse than all bodily failings  
Is the weakening mind which presently cannot remember  
Names of slaves, nor the face of the friend he dined with last evening,

Cannot remember the names of offspring begotten and reared,  
So, by a cruel will, he disinherits his children,  
Leaving his whole estate to a whore, for services rendered,  
Such was the power of the breath of that mouth in the jail of that archway.

Perhaps he is strong of mind; even so, he must bury his children,  
Gaze on the funeral pyre of the wife he loves, or his brother's,  
Or the urns that hold the ashes and dust of a sister.  
Such are the punishments paid to men who live long; they grow older

With the doom of the house renewed forever and ever.  
Sorrow and grief abound, and the black raiment of mourning.  
Nestor's life, if we place any trust in the stories of Homer,  
Almost equalled the days of the long-lived raven. How happy  
In that he put off his death through many a generation,  
Counting his years beyond scores, drinking the new wine so often.  
Happy? But wait just a moment—he found enough cause for complaining

Over fate's decrees, when he saw his Antilochus burning  
On the funeral pyre, when he asked of every companion  
Why he had lived so long, what crime he had done to deserve this.

So did Peleus mourn when he grieved for the loss of Achilles;  
So did Laertes mourn over the sea-borne Odysseus.  
Priam, perhaps, might have come to the shades while Troy was uninjured,

With Hector conducting the rites and the rest of his sons in attendance,

While Polyxena rent her robes, and Cassandra bewailed him,  
If he had died at a different time, died long before Paris  
Built the reckless ships that carried him seaward to Sparta.  
What did his length of days bring him? The sight of his Asia  
Overthrown, and the sword and the fire and the work of destruction.

So he put off his crown, and, a trembling old man, but a soldier,  
Fell like an aged ox before high Jupiter's altar,  
Giving his ancient throat to be cut by the knife of his master.  
Such was Priam's fate, but at least his departure was human.  
Hecuba ended her days as a yapping bitch by the seashore.

I come back to the men of our own race—never mind Croesus  
Warned by the eloquent voice of Solon to look to his future.  
Never mind the king of Pontus, astute Mithridates.  
Look what a long life brought to Marius—exile and prison,  
A life in the swamps of Minturnae, begging for bread in a city  
Carthage, conquered by Rome. But now suppose he had fallen  
Just as he stepped from his car, after parading his captives  
With victorious pomp, triumphant over the Teutons,  
Whom could Nature, or Rome, have blessed with a happier glory?  
Looking ahead, the land of Campania offered to Pompey  
A fever he should have preferred to the anxious prayers of the cities.

These restored him to health, but he was saved to be conquered.  
Rome's good luck, and his own, spared his head for the sword of Achilles.

No such indignity came to Lentulus; Catiline's body  
Fell in death, intact; and the same was true of Cethegus.

When a mother sees the shrine of Venus, she whispers  
Modest prayers for her sons, and louder ones for her daughters,  
Carrying fondness too far. "But why should you blame me?" she  
murmurs,

"Does not Latona rejoice in the beautiful form of Diana?"  
All very well, but the rape of Lucretia forbids us to pray for  
Any such beauty as hers, and Verginia would offer the hunchbacked  
Rutila her good looks in exchange for her hump and her safety.  
Any good-looking boy is a constant worry to parents.  
All too rarely good looks combine with decent behavior.  
Grant that an austere home has taught him its holy traditions,  
Ways as noble and pure as those of the ancient Sabines,  
Grant that beyond all this Nature has lavishly given  
Continenence, almost innate, and virtuous guise and expression—  
(What better gifts can a youth receive from the kindness of Nature  
Whose solicitous care has far more power than a guardian's?)—  
Grant all this, and yet he will not be allowed to be manly.  
His parents will sell him out; corruptors are daring, and lavish,  
And money has absolute power. No autocrat in his castle  
Ever castrated an ugly young man, no Nero would ever  
Rape a club-footed boy, or one with the itch, or a hunchback.  
Go ahead, if you like; rejoice in your young man's beauty.  
So much the greater his danger. He will become a he-whore  
Fearing the punishments the law allows cuckolded husbands.  
No more lucky than Mars, the net will be spread for him also.  
He will learn that sometimes a husband's rage is excessive,  
Greater than law allows, the sword, or the lash, or the mullet.  
But your pure young man will never be more than the lover  
Of some matron he loves. You think so? You'll find that for money  
He can perform without love, and strip her of more than her garments.

What will she ever refuse, an Oppia or a Catulla,  
Given a good wet lay? Between their legs is their conscience.  
"What harm does beauty do if a boy is chaste?" What a question!  
Go ask Bellerophon, go ask Hippolytus. Virtue  
Did them no good at all with Stheneboea and Phaedra.  
*Hell hath no fury like a woman scorned*, with her hatred  
Lashed by her sexual rage.

And what advice should we give him,  
That young man on whom the wife of Caesar is looking,  
Eying with bigamous lust? The handsomest lad in the city,  
The finest and best, patrician of birth, is a pitiful victim.  
Messalina's eyes have doomed him to utter destruction.  
She has been sitting there, with the bridal veil on her shoulders  
While the bridal bed is spread in the public gardens,  
While, with ancient pomp, the dowry, thousands on thousands,  
Duly is paid with the seers and official witnesses present.  
Do you think these are secret rites, known only to intimate cronies?  
Never! A lady like this always gets legally married.  
Tell him what to do now. Disobey her, and die before morning?  
Or let her have her way, accept a reprieve, till the city  
Hears of the whole affair and it reaches the ears of our leader?  
The husband will be the last (they usually are) to suspect it.  
Meanwhile, obey her commands, if a few days' life is important.  
There is no such thing as an easier way, or a better.  
Give your fair white neck to the sword—that much you can offer.

So—should men pray for nothing at all? If you're asking my counsel,

You will permit the gods themselves to make the decision  
What is convenient to give, and what befits our estate.  
We shall not get what we want, but the things most suitable for us.

Man is dearer to gods than he is to himself. We are foolish,  
Led by blind desire, the spirit's extravagant impulse,  
Asking for marriage and offspring, but the gods know what they'll  
be like,

Our wives and our sons. But still, just for the sake of the asking,  
For the sake of something to give to the chapels, ritual entrails,  
The consecrated meat of a little white pig, pray for one thing,  
Pray for a healthy mind in a healthy body, a spirit  
Unafraid of death, but reconciled to it, and able  
To bear up, to endure whatever troubles afflict it,  
Free from hate and desire, preferring Hercules' labors  
To the cushions and loves and feasts of Sardanapallus.

I show you what you can give to yourself: only through virtue  
Lies the certain road to a life that is blessed and tranquil.

If men had any sense, Fortune would not be a goddess.

We are the ones who make her so, and give her a place in the  
heavens.

## THE ELEVENTH SATIRE

### *With an invitation to dinner*

ATTICUS, feasting in state, is considered a very *chic* fellow.  
Rutilus, doing the same, is a madman. What do the people  
Laugh at with louder guffaws than a poverty-stricken Apicius?  
Every clubroom and bath, every bar, every theatre buzzes  
Over Rutilus' case. He is active, young, and hot-blooded,  
Not too old for the draft, but he seems to be out of control,  
Signing up, or about to sign, with a trainer of gladiators.  
Nobody makes him do this, but neither does any one stop him.  
You will see many like him, with a frustrated creditor waiting,  
Hoping perhaps he'll show up at the market to buy his provisions,  
Since his only excuse for living lies in his palate.  
On the verge of collapse, the wretch, for exactly that reason,

Feasts in extravagant style; no price is considered excessive  
While he is trying to find something new in the way of *hors*  
*d'oeuvres*.

Matter of fact, the more it costs, the better he likes it.  
It's no trouble at all to hock the family silver—  
Ready cash is the stuff that seasons the plainest of dishes  
Till, at the last, they come to the fare of gladiators.  
So it matters a lot who it is that's providing the banquet.  
Rutilus? What a waste! Ventidius? What a fine fellow,  
Really a prince! It all depends on the state of his fortune.

I have no use for the man who knows how much higher Atlas  
Is than the Libyan hills, and yet is unable to tell you  
What the difference is between a purse and a strongbox.  
*Know thyself* is worth keeping in mind, a watchword from Heaven,  
Whether you look for a wife or covet a seat in the senate.  
Thersites had better sense than to set up a claim for the armor  
Worn by Achilles once, but hardly graced by Ulysses.  
If you aspire to defend a difficult case, but important,  
Give yourself some advice, find out first who you are,  
An eloquent orator, really, or just a mouthpiece like Matho.  
Take your own measure and keep it in mind, in great matters or  
small ones.

If you are buying a fish, don't go to the market for mullet  
When all you have in your purse is the price of a sardine or minnow.  
If your poke shrinks, but your gullet expands, what outcome awaits  
you

When your inherited goods and your own are devoured by a belly  
Holding principal, interest, silverware, acres, and cattle?  
The last thing such owners as these ever give up is the ring;  
When his finger is naked, Pollio has to start begging.

Luxury need not look on early death as a terror;  
What extravagance dreads is old age, more fearful than dying.

Here is the way it goes: they borrow money and blow it  
Under the lender's nose, right here in the heart of Rome,  
Then, when it's just about gone, and the creditor starts to turn  
pale,

They take it on the lam, run off to Baiae and oysters.  
Leaving town is no worse, in their opinion, than moving  
Out of a squalid slum to an air-conditioned apartment.  
Only one thing breaks the heart of these *émigrés* leaving the coun-  
try,

That is missing the games and the Circus for one whole season.  
They have lost the power of blushing, and only a few men  
Fail to deride and jeer as decency flees from the city.

You will find out today, my good friend Persicus, whether  
I live up, in my life, to all my beautiful maxims,  
Whether I recommend beans, but live on *paté de foie gras*,  
Whether I mean *petits fours* when I send my boy out for *polenta*.  
Now that you've promised to come as my guest, you will find King  
Evander

Playing the part of your host; you can be the Tirynthian hero,  
Hercules, or, if you like, the less important Aeneas,  
Both with the blood of gods in their veins, both carried to Heaven,  
One by water and one by fire.

Now, Persicus, listen.

Here's what we're going to have, things we can't get in a market.  
From a field I own near Tivoli—this you can count on—  
The fattest kid in the flock, and the tenderest, one who has never  
Learned about grass, nor dared to nibble the twigs of the willow,



With more milk in him than blood; and mountain asparagus gathered

By my foreman's wife, after she's finished her weaving.

Then there will be fresh eggs, great big ones, warm from the nest  
With straw wisps stuck to the shells, and we'll cook the chickens  
that laid them.

We'll have grapes kept part of the year, but fresh as they were on  
the vines,

Syrian bergamot pears, or the red ones from Segni in Latium;  
In the same basket with these the fragrant sweet-smelling apples  
Better than those from Picenum. Don't worry, they're perfectly  
ripened,

Autumn's chill has matured their greenness, mellowed their juices.

Such a meal would have pleased our luxury-loving senate  
In the good old days, when Curius, with his own hands,  
Plucked from his little garden and brought to his little hearth-fire  
Potherbs such as now your chain-gang digger of ditches  
Turns up his dirty nose at, preferring the more familiar  
Stink of sow's you-know-what in the reeking warmth of the cook-  
shop.

In the old days, for a feast, they would have a side of salt pork  
Hung from an open rack; for the relatives' birthdays, bacon,  
Adding (perhaps) fresh meat, if a sacrificed victim supplied it.  
To such a banquet would come a kinsman, thrice hailed as a consul,  
One who had ruled over camps, invested with dictator's office,  
Knocking off work for the day a little sooner than normal,  
Over his shoulder the mattock with which he'd been taming the  
hillsides.

When men trembled before the strictness of Cato the Censor,  
Dreading the Fabii, Aemilius Scaurus, Fabricius

(For no censor believed himself safe from a colleague's rebuke),  
No one, in those old days, thought it of any importance  
What kind of tortoise shell swam in the waves of the ocean,  
Destined to prop up the pates of our noblemen, Trojan-descended.  
Couches used to be small, their sides unadorned, with a headpiece  
Maybe of simple bronze, displaying the head of a burro  
Crowned with leaves of the vine, a sight for the countryside bump-  
kins  
To laugh at and caper around—everything perfectly simple,  
Furniture, household, food.

Those were the days when the soldier,  
Rough and tough, neither knew nor cared for the art of the Greeks.  
After cities were taken, his share, perhaps, of the booty  
Might have been goblets made by some magnificent artist.  
So what?—he broke them up for trappings to put on his war  
horse,  
To use for embossing his helmet and let his enemy, dying,  
See the wolf made tame, as imperial destiny ordered,  
Or the twins at the base of the rock, or the fearful sight of the War-  
god  
Coming down with his spear and his shield. The silver of soldiers  
Shone on their arms, nowhere else; they ate out of earthenware  
dishes.  
Theirs were very fine ways, and more than deserving your envy,  
If you can envy at all. The might of the temples was nearer:  
The midnight voice was heard, and the gods themselves were their  
prophets,  
Telling the heart of the town of the Gauls on their way from the  
ocean.  
So we were solemnly warned, and Jupiter, made out of clay,  
Undeified by gold, proved that he cherished his people.

Those days saw our tables homemade from the native trees.  
For such uses the wood was piled, if southeasterly gales  
Brought the walnut down from its ancient hold on the hillside.  
But your rich men now have no real pleasure in dining—  
The fish and the game are insipid, the roses and perfumes stink,  
If the citrus slabs don't rest on one ivory column  
With a leopard's head at the top, the mouth wide open, and fashioned,  
All of it, out of the tusks exported from Indian jungles,  
From the Moroccan frontier, or some Arabian forest  
Where the monstrous beasts had shed their fabulous weapons.  
This is what gives a man good appetite, splendid digestion:  
A silver table leg he scorns, like a ring made of iron.  
Well, I avoid the guest, haughty and proud, who compares me  
To himself (for the worse), and despises my humble appointments.  
I have not even an ounce of ivory—look at my chessmen,  
Look at my dice. My knives, you will notice, have handles of bone,  
Yet I cannot see that the taste of my victuals is rancid,  
Nor that the pullet I slice is any the worse for that reason.  
I do not have any carver, to whom his whole school and profession  
Have to bow down, the pride of Professor Tryphera, Doctor  
Of courses instructing the boys how to cut up hares and sows' udders,  
Boars and springboks and pheasants, flamingoes, Gaetulian gazelles,  
All very smart: *clack-clack*, blunt knives on the models of elm-wood  
Till the whole quarter resounds. My own inexperienced youngster  
Never learned in his life to snitch a guinea-hen's wing,  
Help himself to a slice of venison; all that he ever  
Managed to grab or gulp would be a morsel of cutlet.  
As for my cups, nothing fancy, the kind you can pay for with pennies.

These will be handed around by a boy, no smooth type at all,  
Dressed to keep himself warm, no Persian or Phrygian import  
Bought from a dealer whose wares are entirely luxury items.  
Any service you want you'll have to ask for in Latin.  
All my boys dress alike; their hair is straight and close-cropped.  
They have combed it today, but that's because of this party.  
One is a sheepherder's son; the man who looks after the cattle  
Fathered the other lad, who sighs when he thinks of his mother  
Whom he's not seen for so long; he's more than a little bit homesick  
For the cabin he knows and the four-legged kids that he plays with.  
He has an honest look, natural, simple, and modest,  
Such as those should have with the crimson stripe on their togas.  
He doesn't go to the baths with an oil flask over his members,  
Showing his armpits all shaved, an exhibitionist loudmouth.  
He will serve you a wine that came from the very mountains  
Where he was born himself, whose slopes he knew as his play-  
ground.  
One and the same native land produced the wine and its server.

Possibly you may expect to watch the Ladies from Cadiz  
Winning applause for their act, their song and dance, with the  
climax  
When they sink to the floor and lie there bumping and grinding.  
Brides enjoy watching this, with their husbands lying beside them,  
Though it would be a disgrace to mention such acts in their pres-  
ence—  
How, when desire is limp, the rich find means to arouse it.  
Who can say which sex feels the more voluptuous pleasure?  
The more it gets prolonged, for eyes and ears to delight in,  
The greater the likelihood of wet pants, one way or another.  
No such nonsense as this in my humble house. Let the rich man

Hear the clatter-bones, and the language too strong for the naked  
Tart with the smelly groin; leave lust, and its arts and expressions  
To the fellow who owns parquets of marble from Sparta  
On which he spits out his wine. The rich deserve our forgiveness.  
Men of moderate means are in disgrace if they gamble,  
In disgrace if they wench, but the rich, doing this kind of business,  
Merit our compliments: *gay souls, splendid fellows*, we call them.  
In my house today there will be no such entertainment.  
We shall read about Troy in Homer's epic or Virgil's  
High and lofty song, so noble that what does it matter  
Whose the voice that reads?

Put away the cares of your business,  
Give yourself a rest, the whole day long; never mention  
Money at all; never mind if your wife goes out before daylight  
Coming home at night with stigmata of irrigation,  
With disheveled hair, and her face and her ears still burning.  
Put aside your worries, and when you step over my threshold,  
Think no more of your home, your slaves, and the damage they  
cause you  
Breaking and losing things; forget your thankless companions.

Now the Great Games are on, and the praetor, seated in triumph,  
Really becomes the prey of the horses, and, if I may say so  
Without giving offense to the countless hordes of the people,  
The Circus has captured Rome. The roar that beats on my eardrums  
Tells me the Green has won; for you'd see the city in mourning  
Otherwise, stricken dumb as after the battle of Cannae  
When consuls lay low in the dust. These games are all right for the  
young,  
With their noise and betting, the chance to sit with a girl at the  
races,

*lines 203–208*

WITH AN INVITATION TO DINNER

But let my wrinkled old skin soak up the sun in the springtime,  
Giving the toga a miss. Here, though there's still a full hour  
Till the sun is at noon, you can head for the bath, and no one will  
blame you.

Do this five days in a row, and you'll find yourself bored. Isn't pleasure

All the more keen in our lives the less we're inclined to repeat it?



## THE TWELFTH SATIRE

### *On the near-shipwreck of a friend*

THIS is a sweeter light, Corvinus, than my own birthday's.  
Now the festal turf waits for its beasts, the ex-votos  
I have promised the gods, a snowy lamb to Queen Juno,  
One just as white for Minerva, whose breastplate is armed with the  
Gorgon,  
And for Tarpeian Jove a victim who pulls the rope taut,  
Tossing his head so the light keeps coming and going about him.  
This is a fierce little bull, ripe for the temples and altar,  
No more a suckling, but fit for pure wine poured over his forelock,  
With his growing horns beginning to thrust at the oak trees.  
If my fortunes at home were anything like my ambitions,  
I would be dragging along a bull as fat as Hispulla,



Pliny's old aunt, a bull not nourished on neighborhood grasses,  
But bulky and sluggish from cropping the rich green fields of Clitumnus,

Head held high and a neck no puny priestling should hack at—  
This for my friend's return; he is trembling still, he has suffered  
Horrible things, and now can hardly believe his own safety.  
He has escaped the perils of sea, the blast of the lightning.  
Dark and thick, the murk hid all the sky, and a flash,  
Suddenly, out of one cloud, shattered the yardarms. Each man  
Thought himself hit by the bolt, and in his terror was certain  
No shipwreck ever was worse than this. The sails were on fire!  
Everything happened here, the way it does in a poem,  
Just that kind of a storm! And that wasn't all of it, either.  
Listen, and pity again: there are many similar stories,  
Terrible, widely known, as proved by the votive tablets  
In our temples and shrines, does not Isis grant painters a living?

Just such a fortune as this was the lot of my good friend Catullus.  
When the hold was half-drowned, and the vessel rolled in the billows,  
When the old gray-haired captain, for all his wisdom, seemed helpless,  
While the mast wobbled and shook, he decided to jettison cargo.  
This he learned from the beaver, who makes himself into a eunuch,  
Willing enough to escape with the loss of his testicles, knowing  
What a precious drug those glands produce by secretion.  
"Heave my stuff overboard, every bit of it!" shouted Catullus,  
Willing to fling to the winds even his finest possessions,  
Purple garments fit for Maecenases, luxury lovers,  
Other fabrics, dyed on the back of the sheep through the virtue  
Of the generous grass, not to mention the marvelous water

(That must have helped, of course), and the Andalusian climate.  
Also consigned to the deep went the silver plate and the salvers  
Wrought in Parthenius' shop, the wine bowls worthy of Pholus  
Holding three gallons apiece, the proper amount for Saufeia;  
Also, baskets from Gaul, and dishes, up in the thousands,  
Also, goblets, engraved, that Philip of Macedon drank from.  
What other man in what part of the world would value his safety  
More than his silver plate, or reckon his life above money?  
Not for a living's sake do the greed-blinded try to make fortunes,  
But their fortunes, it seems, afford the incentive for living.

Most of the cargo has gone, but the ship still wallows in danger.  
There is a last resort, taking an axe to the mast,  
A desperate measure indeed: save the ship by making it smaller.  
Go now, trust your life to the winds, to a thickness of planking,  
How many inches? Three, or six at the most, if you're lucky.  
Next time you sail, take along not only your bags of provisions,  
Your bread and your big-bellied flasks, but see you have plenty of  
hatchets  
Those you might need in a storm.

But the sea grew calm, and our sailor  
Happened on better times, and his fate was stronger than ocean,  
Stronger than wind, and the Sisters began to smile at their spinning,  
Working with whiter strands, and a breeze whispered ever so gently,  
Filling the shirts stretched out for sails and the one rag of canvas.  
Then the wind died down, and hope came back with the sunshine.  
Then the height appeared, Mount Alba, dear to Iulus,  
More beloved by him than his stepmother's harbor, Lavinum.  
This was the headland the Trojans named for the famous white sow  
With the thirty young around her marvelous udders.

So Catullus comes to the moles that run like a bulwark  
Out to enclose the sea, beyond the Tyrrhenian lighthouse,  
Moles that meet again in the midst of the sea, with the mainland  
Left far behind. This port is indeed an improvement on nature,  
Wonderful to behold, and thither the captain is steering  
With his crippled craft to the inner haven of safety  
Where the frailest yacht could ride in peace, and the sailors,  
Shaving their heads, as they vowed, babble about their adventures.

Go, then, boys, and with words and spirit attuned in devotion,  
Garland the shrines, strew meal on the knives, adorn the soft altars  
Made of green turf; I will follow, and, having performed my obla-  
tions,

Come again home, where my small images shine with the fragrant  
Grace of the wax, to receive the verdant wreaths that adorn them.  
Here I'll propitiate Jove, and offer the household Lares  
Incense, and strew at their feet all bright-colored little flowers;  
All things are shining here; the gateway rears its long branches,  
The lanterns, ready since morning, are lit for the festal occasion.

Do not, I beg you, Corvinus, regard these rites with suspicion.  
Catullus, for whose return I deck these altars, has children,  
Three small heirs of his own. It would take you long to discover  
Any one else who would give, for a friend who promises nothing,  
One old sickly hen just closing her eyelids forever.  
A hen would cost too much. Not even a quail will be offered  
For a man with sons. But if the wealthy Galitta,  
Or if Pacius, rich too, feel the least touch of a fever,  
Every pillar along their porches will blossom with tablets  
Hung in due form, and men will come out, the hecatomb-vowers,

Promising oxen by hundreds, since elephants cannot be purchased  
Here in our land, but are brought from the darkest African jungles  
To feed in Rutulian woods and the ancient meadows of Turnus.  
The emperor owns the herd; they will bow to no private master  
Since their ancestors took orders from Hannibal, Pyrrhus,  
Roman generals, too, and their backs would carry whole cohorts—  
No mean part of the war!—in the howdahs they bore into battle,  
Novius would not delay, nor Pacuvius from the Danube  
Hesitate at all to bring such an ivory creature  
As offering to the shrine, a victim for Gallitta's Lares.  
None more worthy of such great gods nor their reverent seekers.  
Either of these, should you grant him permission, would willingly  
offer,  
Willingly vow, to the shrine the handsomest one of his slave boys,  
Decking them out, and his maidservants too, with the ritual fil-  
lets.  
Or if he had in his house a daughter like Iphigenia,  
Of an age to be wed, he would lead her up to the altar,  
Though he could hardly expect the deer of the tragic poets  
To be put in her place, a stealthy kind of replacement.

I have to give him praise, my fellow citizen; never  
Do I think of comparing a thousand ships to a will;  
If the sick man escapes the goddess of death, he's a goner,  
Caught in another net, he will tear up his will, write a new one  
Making Pacuvius heir, for splendid services rendered,  
Not only heir, but sole heir: one stroke of the stylus will do it.  
Won't Pacuvius go walking tall, with his rivals confounded!  
So you can see how worth while was that wonderful deal at My-  
cenae,

Cutting a maiden's throat. Long live Pacuvius! Let him  
Have as many years as Nestor, and have as much money  
As Nero ever stole, pile gold as high as a mountain.  
Let him love no man, and let no man ever love him.

## THE THIRTEENTH SATIRE

### *For a defrauded friend*

ANY performance that sets an evil example displeases  
Even its author himself: to begin with, punishment lies  
In the fact that no man, if guilty, is ever acquitted  
With himself as judge, though he may have won in the courtroom  
Bribing the praetor in charge, or stuffing the urn with false ballots.  
How do you think all men are feeling, Calvinus, about  
Your charge of breach of trust, this latest criminal action?  
But you are pretty well off, you'll not be sunk by such losses,  
You're not the only one; this kind of case is familiar,  
Not to say trite, one grain from the piled-up anthill of fortune.  
Let's cut out the excessive laments. A man's indignation  
Ought not burn out of bounds, nor be bigger than his wound is.

You, on the other hand, can hardly endure an iota,  
The littlest least of light loss, and your bowels are all in an uproar  
Simply because a friend declines to return you a sacred  
Trust, committed to him. But does this really surprise you,  
A man of your age, sixty years, born when Fonteius was consul?  
Has not, in all this time, experience taught you better?

Great, to be sure, is Wisdom, who gives us her holy scripture:  
Fortune bows down to her, but we also consider as happy  
Those whom life has taught to put up with discomforts and nuisance

Without tossing the yoke. What day is ever so festal  
That it fails to produce a thief, a swindler, a traitor,  
Profits made out of crime (all sorts), and money won by the dagger,  
Won by the poisoned cup? There are few good men, not as many  
As the gates of Thebes, or the mouths of the Nile. We are living  
In the ninth age of the world, more base than the era of iron.  
Nature finds no name for this wickedness, having no metal  
Fit to call it by, no alloy like its corruption.

We invoke the faith of gods and men with a clamor  
Loud as free handouts earn Faesidius when he's orating.  
Tell me, old boy (I say *boy*, because you ought to be wearing  
Phylacteries round your neck, the badge of your second childhood),  
Tell me, don't you know the allurements of other men's money?  
Don't you know that the mob laughs at your simple behavior  
When you insist that a man, any man in the world, should be truthful,

Never perjure himself, but believe in divinity's presence  
Where the temples rise and the altars are colored with crimson?  
Once upon a time men lived this way, in the old days,  
Long before Saturn took up the sickle instead of the scepter,

With Juno a cute little girl, and Jove, in the caverns of Ida  
Sequestered, not even a prince. Not yet did the dwellers in Heaven  
Banquet above the clouds, with Hebe and Ganymede  
Bringing the cups; not yet did Vulcan swig down his nectar,  
Wipe off his sweaty arms black from Aeolian anvils.  
Each god used to dine by himself, no such rabble of idols  
As there is today, and the stars were content with a smaller  
Roster of heavenly powers, a lesser load for poor Atlas.  
No one had drawn by lot the gloomy underworld empire;  
There was no glowering Dis beside his Sicilian consort,  
There was no wheel, no rack, no black and punishing vulture,  
There were no Furies at all, but the Shades, without any monarchs  
In the realms below, were quite contented and happy.  
Lack of probity then was something truly surprising,  
A terrible sin, they thought, and worthy of death, if a young man  
Did not rise and stand to show his regard for his elders.  
Any bearded man, no matter who, was entitled  
To a boy's respect, though the latter's home might be richer,  
With more strawberries there, and huger mountains of acorns.  
Reverence came to the man who was older, if only by four years.  
Was the first down of youth equal to honored old age?

But today, if a friend does not deny that you gave him  
Money to keep in trust, if he gives back the old leather wallet  
With the rusty coins, what a portent we call it! Prodigious!  
Garland and slaughter a lamb! Make it a matter of record!  
If I see a man of integrity, what an occasion!  
Really a freak, I would say, like a boy with a double member,  
Like fishes found under a plough while the wide-eyed yokel marvels,  
Like a pregnant mule, like a rain of stones. This upsets me  
As would a cluster of bees if it swarmed on the roof of a temple,



As would a river that poured torrents of milk to the ocean.

You have been robbed, you complain, of something like five hundred dollars—

A swindle, a sacrilege! But what if another man's losses  
Equal ten thousand? what if still another has lost even more,  
So much more, in fact, that a strongbox could never contain it?  
It's simple, it's easy enough, if no mortal man knows about it,  
For the thief to scorn or despise the gods who are watching from  
Heaven.

Hear his loud voice as he lies! Look at his brazen expression!  
By the rays of the Sun (he swears), by Jupiter's lightning,  
By the spear of Mars, the darts of Apollo of Delphi,  
By Diana's quiver, by the trident of Aegean Neptune,  
Then, for good measure, he adds Hercules' bow and Minerva's  
Lance and anything else in the ordnance supply-rooms of Heaven.  
If he's a father, he adds, with tears, "May I eat for my dinner  
The boiled head of my son with Egyptian vinegar dressing,  
If I'm not telling the truth!"

Some men think that luck determines everything mortal,  
Nobody governs the world, but Nature revolves in their courses  
The changes of day and of year; and men like these, without awe,  
Touch any altars you please. Another type always is fearful  
Punishment follows crime, he thinks there are gods, but no matter,  
He perjures himself just the same. "Let Isis decide what she pleases  
With this body of mine, let her shatter my sight with her sistrum,  
Just so, in blindness, I keep the coins I deny I have stolen;  
Ulcers that bleed, or one lung, or half a leg—these are worth it.  
If Lados, the champion runner, were poor, but still had his senses,  
Needing no hellebore cure, no psychotherapist's counsel,

He should not hesitate to pray for the rich man's ailment  
Known as the gout: what good is speed, the renown of a sprinter?  
Can you make a meal on a branch of Olympian olive?  
Maybe the wrath of the gods is great, but it's certainly tardy.  
If they take the pains to punish all of the guilty,  
When will they get to me? And I might find the god can be prayed  
to,  
Pardoning deeds like mine. The fates of criminals differ.  
One gets the cross, another the crown, for the same misdemeanor."

So he consoles his mind for his guilt and trembles in terror.  
Call him to purge himself at the shrine, and he'll get there before  
you,  
Ready to drag you there, to worry and nag you to test him.  
Nothing like nerve and gall to make a bad case look better;  
Boldness induces belief. He brazens it out, like the comic  
Runaway clown in the play composed by the clever Catullus.  
All you can do, poor dupe, is to bellow louder than Stentor,  
Louder than Homer's Mars: "Do you hear this, Jupiter? Do you  
Not so much as move your lips, when you ought to be vocal,  
Marble though you may be, or bronze? Then why are we placing  
On your burning coals the packets of holy incense,  
Calves' liver, white hog-caul? As far as I can discover,  
There's no choice to be made between your images, graven,  
And Vagellus' bust."

And now, for your consolation,  
Hear what a man can say who is neither a Cynic nor Stoic,  
(They don't differ much more than a tunic's thickness would measure),  
A man who holds no brief for Epicurean contentment

With the growing slips in one diminutive garden.  
Puzzling cases should be referred to the best of physicians,  
But yours could be diagnosed by a chiropractor's apprentice.  
If you can show me no deed in the whole wide world as disgusting  
As what happened to you, I'll have nothing to say, I'll not tell you  
To leave off thumping your chest with your fists, or pounding your  
cheeks

With the flat of your palm. Since ruin has been accepted,  
The doors of the house must be closed, and the weeping and wailing  
be louder

Than they would be for a death. The loss of money is awful,  
Such a terrible thing that no one can counterfeit mourning,  
No one be content with merely rending his garments,  
Rubbing his eyes to produce crocodile tears. If your money  
Is gone, you will really cry with genuine lamentation.

But if you see all the courts filled up with complaints like your own,  
If the tablets are read, inspected, turned over and over,  
Then are pronounced a fraud, mere wood and wax, or waste paper,  
In spite of the handwriting there, or the print of the sardonyx seal-  
ring,

Kept in its ivory case, alas! my dear fellow, Calvinus,  
Do you think this makes you unique, some kind of a white hen's  
chicken,

The rest of us all common fowl, hatched out of eggs ill-omened?  
You have not lost very much, you could bear this with moderate  
choler

If you would turn your eyes toward greater crimes. Take, for instance,  
The hired hoodlum, the fire lit by the arsonist's sulphur  
Burning the gates of your house; or think of those robbers of temples  
Taking off great cups whose very rust should be worshipped,

The gifts of the people, or crowns, the oblations of ancient monarchs.

If these are not there, a lesser profaner arises  
To shave the gilded face of Neptune, or Hercules' thigh,  
To strip the gold leaf off Castor. Why not? But the thief prefers  
bigger

Game, the melting down of Jupiter, Lord of the Thunder.  
Or consider, again, the makers and merchants of poison,  
The parricide thrown to the sea in the hide of an ox, and beside  
him,

Since the fates are adverse, an entirely innocent monkey.  
This is only a part of the criminal calendar, running,  
Daily, from dawn to dark: if you're eager to learn the behavior  
Of the human race, this courthouse should more than suffice you.  
Spend a few days there, and when you come out, you will hardly  
Dare call yourself out of luck. Would a goiter surprise anybody  
If it appeared in the Alps? Would a tourist in upper Egypt  
Marvel that bobbies there were bigger than big fat babies?  
Who is stunned at the sight of a blond-haired, blue-eyed German  
Making horns of his hair, with ringlets moistened and twisted?  
This is the way things are, and all share a common nature.

A pygmy runs to the wars in his diminutive armor,  
Facing the Thracian cranes, their resonant clouds and their swooping,  
ing,

Soon to be caught, overmatched, by his enemy, and swept upward,  
Borne in crooked claws through the curving air. If you saw this  
Here in Rome, you would laugh yourself sick; but there, where the  
cohorts

Tower twelve inches high, at these continuous battles  
Nobody ever guffaws.

“Shall he go scot free, then, this traitor,  
Swindler, perjurer, crook?” Well, now, suppose he is hustled  
Off in the heaviest chains, or—what more could your anger be asking?—

Put to death at our whim. You still don’t recover your money,  
You don’t get any refund. “But the least drop of blood from the  
headless

Body will give me some comfort, a solace to mix with my hatred.  
Vengeance is sweeter than life!” That’s how the ignorant babble,  
Those whose hearts you see on fire for the slightest of reasons  
Or for no reason at all. But you will not hear a Chrysippus  
Talking like this, you won’t hear the gentle genius of Thales  
Making any such sounds, and the old man who lived near Hymettus,  
The honeysweet mountain, would not have forced on his cruel accuser

So much as one drop of the hemlock he had to drink in his dungeon.  
Wisdom, by slow degrees, strips off our vices and follies,  
Teaching us what is right. For Vengeance always is silly,  
The proof of a mean little mind, and here is one way you can tell it:  
No one enjoys revenge nearly so much as a woman.

But why should you think they have gotten away with their crimes,  
when awareness

Of their evil deeds holds their minds in bemusement,  
Lashing with strokes unheard, and the soul supplies its own torture  
Wielding the secret whip? A terrible punishment, truly,  
Far more savage than those of Caedicius or Rhadamanthus,  
To carry in one’s own heart, by night, by day, his accuser.  
Once upon a time a Spartan was told by the priestess  
Of the Pythian shrine that punishment surely awaited  
Any man who planned, as he did, to hold on to the money

Placed in his trust, and then compound the offense by false witness.  
He was asking, it seems, what was the mind of Apollo,  
Whether the god would approve or sanction any such project.  
So he gave it all back, because he was frightened, not honest,  
Nevertheless, in the end, he found that the voice from the temple  
Told the reverend truth, for, with his sons and his household,  
With relations far removed from immediate kinship,  
He was destroyed. The mere wish to sin brings on retribution.  
He who plots a crime, though it never is openly mentioned,  
Has the guilt of the deed.

Suppose he succeeds in his purpose.

He is forever obsessed by anxiety, even at dinner.  
His jaws are as dry as if he were sick; his bread he can't swallow,  
Can't even chew, poor wretch, and he spits out his wine on the floor,  
Finding the precious old Alban vintage completely distasteful.  
Show him a better wine, and he starts to wrinkle his forehead,  
Making a face as wry as if it had come from Falernum,  
Vinegar, sourer than swill. In the night, if his worry permits him  
Even the briefest rest, and his tossing limbs become quiet,  
In his dreams he sees, straightway, the temple, the altar  
Of the outraged god, and, even more of a burden  
On his night-sweating soul, he sees you, looming above him,  
Larger than life, a threat, a menace, exacting confession.  
Such men tremble and pale at every flash of the lightning;  
When it thunders, they swoon at the very first rumble from heaven,  
Not as if it were chance, or the madness of winds, but that fire  
Falls on earth in wrath, vindictive deliberate judgment.  
That storm did no harm, but the next is all the more frightful  
For the illusion of calm, the false postponement of vengeance.  
If they begin to ache with pains in the side, and a fever,  
They are certain the god has sent this illness upon them,

These are the stones he hurls, these are his lances and arrows.  
They dare not vow to his shrine a bleating victim, nor offer  
The Lares a crested cock; the guilty sick are not granted  
Hope: what victim is not more entitled to living than they are?  
The nature of evil men is mostly capricious and shiftily.  
When they commit a crime, they have more than enough resolution,

But the sense of right and wrong—that seems to come to them only  
After the deed is done. Still, habit becomes second nature—  
Back to the scene of the crime. Who ever places a limit  
On his own season of evil? When does he ever recover  
The blush that has been expelled in disgrace from the hardened  
forehead?

Whom have you ever seen content with one villainous action?  
Sooner or later this rascal of ours will get into trouble,  
Step in the noose, succumb to the hook of the dungeon in darkness,  
Face the Aegean rock, the cliffs and crags that are crowded  
With our illustrious exiles. You will rejoice that a bitter  
Punishment comes to the name you hate, and you will be happy,  
At long last, and admit that the gods have all of their senses,  
That not one is deaf, or blind like Tiresias the prophet.

## THE FOURTEENTH SATIRE

### *On education in avarice*

THERE are a great many things, Fuscinus, of evil renown,  
Things that are bound to stain and sully the brightest of fortunes,  
Taught and handed down to the sons of a house by the fathers.  
If the old man throws dice and loses, the son has to gamble  
While he is still in his teens, and rattles his own little dicebox.  
Nor need relations hope for better things from that youngster,  
Who, with a gourmand sire, a hoary old glutton as teacher,  
Knows all about peeling truffles, all about seasoning mushrooms,  
All about drowning in gravy the delicate beccaficoes.  
When he's not much more than seven years old, still losing his milk  
teeth,  
You could place on each side a thousand reverend masters,



Bearded and grave, but his appetite still would be for the dainties,  
For the sumptuous style, for the most fastidious tables.

Does Rutilus teach us to show a merciful disposition,  
Charity toward slight faults? Does he think that body and spirit  
Are made of the selfsame stuff in the case of slaves and of freemen?  
Or does he teach us to rage, to rejoice, as he does, in the cruel  
Sound of the whip, a music more sweet to him than the Sirens'?  
A tyrant of giant size he is to his trembling household,  
Happy only at times when he summons the torturer, branding  
Some poor slave with hot iron for snitching a couple of towels.  
What is a young man taught by a sire who delights in the clanking  
Of the iron chains, the branded slaves, and the dungeons?  
Are you greenhorn enough to suppose that the daughter of Larga  
Won't grow up to be a promiscuous bitch, when it took her  
Thirty deep breaths, as a child, to get through the list of the lovers  
Known to sleep with her mother? Even when she was a virgin,  
Mamma would tell her all; and now, at Mamma's dictation,  
She fills little wax tablets, and sends them off to her lovers  
By the very same queers. Such is the order of Nature.  
Evil examples at home corrupt us all the more quickly  
Since they subvert our minds with the sanction of loftier warrant.  
Maybe one youth, or two, might possibly scorn this behavior,  
Souls made of better clay by the kindlier art of the Titan.  
As for the rest, they are led in the evil paths of their fathers,  
Dragged in the wheel-ruts of guilt shown to them over and over.

So, shun damnable deeds. For this there's at least one good reason—  
Lest our children repeat the crimes we have taught them. We all  
Are easily led, too prone to imitate wicked behavior.  
Catilines can be found in all kinds of people and places,

But a Brutus is rare, and a Brutus's uncle is rarer.  
Let no dirty word or sight step over the threshold  
Where a father dwells. Far off, far off, ye unholy  
Girls who work for pimps, parasitical night-wasting singers!  
To a child is due the greatest respect: in whatever  
Nastiness you prepare, don't despise the years of your children,  
But let your infant son dissuade you from being a sinner,  
For if, in days to come, he earns the wrath of the censor,  
Being a man like you not only in body and features,  
But also the son of your ways, a walker in all of your footsteps,  
Treading deeper in vice, you will—oh, of course!—be indignant,  
Rail with bitter noise, and make a new will. That will teach him.  
Yet what makes you assume the father's frown, and the father's  
Freedom of speech and act, when you behave worse, as an old man,  
Than he ever did, and the windy cupping-glass searches  
Vainly around your head for brains that it cannot discover?

When a guest is to come, none of your household is idle.  
"Sweep the floor, polish the columns, get the spiderwebs down from  
the ceiling,  
One of you clean the plain silver, another the embossed pieces."  
That's their master's voice, and his whip is ready and waiting.  
So the poor fool has the shakes lest his visitor's eyes be offended  
By a dog-turd in the hall, or a portico spattered with mud,  
Things that one little slave could clean up with a bucket of sawdust,  
Yet he takes no pains that his son may see the house always  
Free of guilt and stain. It is splendid to give to your country,  
To give to your fellow men a citizen, if you can make him  
Valuable to the state, a servant useful, devoted  
Both in the wars and the acts required by peace. It will surely  
Make all the difference, in what arts and habits you train him.

The stork feeds her chicks on snakes and on lizards found in the  
brambles,  
Such will be the prey of the young when they're fledglings no longer;  
The vulture brings to her brood carrion sought from the gibbet,  
From dead cattle and dogs, and this is the food of the vulture  
When he becomes full-grown and builds his own nest in the treetop.  
But the eagles of Jove prey on the rabbit or roebuck  
In the upland heights, and bring this fare to their eyries,  
So when the eaglets mature, they seek for that prey, in their hunger,  
Which they tasted first, soon after the eggshells were broken.

Cretonius likes to build houses: now on the bay of Caieta,  
Now on Tivoli's height, now on Praeneste, his mansions  
Rise with marble brought from Greece or lands beyond Ocean,  
Overtopping the shrines of Fortune or Hercules, even  
More than Posides the eunuch surpassed our Capitol building.  
While Cretonius lived in houses like these, he diminished  
Much of his fortune, he spent his wealth, but hung on to a portion  
Not by any means small, but his son, a madman, destroyed it  
Rearing still newer homes, with marble even more costly.

Those whose lot it was that their fathers worshipped the Sabbath  
Pray to nothing now but the clouds and a spirit in Heaven;  
Since their fathers abstained from pork, they'd be cannibals sooner  
Than violate that taboo. Circumcised, not as the Gentiles,  
They despise Roman law, but learn and observe and revere  
Israel's code, and all from the sacred volume of Moses  
Where the way is not shown to any but true believers,  
Where the uncircumcised are never led to the fountain.  
*Remember the Sabbath Day, to keep it lazy.* The father,  
Setting this day apart from life, is the cause and the culprit.

Young men need not be taught to imitate most of the vices,  
Only avarice seems to oppose their natural instinct.  
Here is a vice, for once, in the shape and shade of a virtue,  
Gloomy of mien, and dour indeed in dress and expression.  
The miserly man is praised, of course, as if he were frugal,  
A saving soul, to be sure, a craftier keeper of fortunes  
Than the dragon of Pontus or the Hesperidean gardens.  
Add the fact that the people thinks of the man whom I mention  
As an artist at gain: estates increase with such forge-men  
And they increase every way, becoming bigger and bigger.  
The anvil is never still and the furnace forever is blazing.

So when a father thinks that the avaricious are happy,  
Looks openmouthed at wealth, and figures no poor man is blessed,  
He is urging young men to follow along that highway,  
To study in that same school. There are A B C's of the vices;  
These he indoctrinates first, compelling his pupils to master  
The meanest, the pettiest things, but before too long he instructs  
them

In the insatiable hopes and passions for acquisition.  
He cramps the guts of his slaves with the shortest, most meager, of  
rations

While he is starving himself, for he cannot possibly manage  
To eat up the pieces of bread, the mouldy blue-colored remnants.  
Even in middle September, the hottest, unhealthiest season,  
Yesterday's mincemeat he saves, and saves, for tomorrow's dinner,  
Beans and half an old fish, a stinking mullet or rock cod,  
Counting the sections of leek he slices to put away with them.  
Bidden to such a feast, a beggar from one of the bridges  
Surely would send his regrets. But why accumulate riches

Through such tortures as these, when it seems the most obvious  
madness

Living the life of a tramp, to be a rich man on your deathbed?  
Meanwhile the moneybag swells, grows fat, and in just that proportion

The love of money bloats up, and he who has only a little  
Covets it least. As for you, a single house in the country  
Does not suffice at all, you will have to purchase another,  
Have to extend your acres, because the neighboring cornfield  
Seems both bigger and better, so you buy it up, and the woodland,  
Also the slope of the hill thick with the gray-green olive.  
If the owner declines to sell under any conditions,  
You can send over by night lean oxen, famishing cattle,  
Into the green of his fields, and tired though they are, they will never  
Find their way home till they've stored the whole crop in their ravenous bellies,  
So that you well might believe it was mown by close-cropping  
sickles.

You could hardly say how many men are bewailing  
Wrongs like these, nor how many fields are sold by such tactics.

But how people do talk! What a blast from the trumpets of rumor!  
"What's the harm?" says he, "I'll take the pods of my lupine  
Over a neighborhood's praise, not to mention the district's,  
If it means that I reap the scanty crops of a small farm."  
Doubtless you will be free of the grip of diseases and weakness,  
You will escape grief and care, and the days of your life will be  
longer,

Blessed with a happier fate, if all by yourself you are owner  
Of as much tilled land as the whole Roman people together  
Ploughed when Tatiüs was king. Later, to broken old Romans

Hurt in the Punic Wars, or the battles with terrible Pyrrhus  
Or the Molossian swords, hardly two acres were given,  
A bonus for countless wounds. Yet no one thought it was meager,  
A miserly recompense for their service of tears and bloodshed;  
No one said that the land was niggardly, thankless, ungrateful.  
One little plot such as this was more than enough for the father  
And the folk of his house, a pregnant wife, and four children  
Playing around the yard, three of them free, one a slave child.  
There'd be another meal steaming, gigantic kettles of porridge,  
When their big brothers came back from working at ditch or at  
furrow.

Any such area now does not suffice for our gardens.

Hence come the causes of crime: there is no greater incentive  
Toward compounding of poisons or thickening blows with the dagger

Than the desire of wealth beyond all moderate limits.  
Get rich, get rich quick. But how can a desperate miser,  
Hustling for all he's worth, ever expect to develop  
Fear or respect for the law, or a decent sense of proportion?  
"Live content, my sons, with your hills and your little cabins,"  
That's what a Marican father might say, or a Vestine old-timer,  
"Let's win our bread by the plough, enough and no more for our  
table;

This our country gods praise, whose help and goodness have given  
The blessing of wheat instead of the hated old diet of acorns.  
A man who is not ashamed to wear hip boots when it's icy,  
Turning away the cold with reversible furs, you will never  
Find him wanting to do actions he knows are forbidden.  
It's the purple garb, the raiment peculiar and foreign,  
Whatever it may be, that leads us to wicked behavior."

Those were the maxims the ancients gave to their children, but  
these days,

After autumn's end, a father at midnight awakens

A son who's asleep on his back and yells at him, "Wake up, get  
going,

Pick up your tablets and write, read up on your cases, and study

The red-lettered laws of the past, or seek the centurion's office.

See that Laelius notes your head, untouched by the comb,

Your hairy nostrils, and stares at your great big masculine shoulders.

Sack the huts of the Moors, the forts of the brigands of Britain,

So that your sixtieth year will bring you the wealth-giving eagle,

Or, if you're lazy and think the rigors of service too tiresome,

If your bowels move at the sound of horn or of trumpet,

Try to find something to sell for a profit, say fifty per centum;

Don't turn up your nose at a business that has to be banished

To the far side of the Tiber, and don't make any distinction

Between the odor of hides and attar of roses; a profit

Always smells good, no matter what possible source it may come  
from.

Here is the slogan for you, a maxim worthy of poets,

Even if Jove himself turned bard: *No one asks where you get it,*

*But money is what you must have.*" These are the lessons for toddlers

Taught them before they can walk by dried-up haggard old nurse-  
maids,

This the girls all learn before their Alpha and Beta.

If a father insists on imparting such admonitions

I would speak to him thus: "Tell me, you silly old codger,

Who is giving the orders to hurry so fast? I would bet you

The pupil will master the teacher. Give up. Go away. Take it easy.

You will be beaten as surely as Telamon was by his Ajax,  
As Peleus was by Achilles; don't be too stern with the youngsters.  
Their marrowbones are not yet filled with the ripeness of evil.  
When he begins to submit the length of his beard to the razor,  
He will be a false witness, a perjury peddler, a cheap one  
Touching the altar and foot of the goddess Ceres in swearing.  
Have you a daughter-in-law? She's as good as dead if she carries  
A dowry over the threshold. Whose fingers will throttle her sleep-  
ing?

Things that you think should accrue by land and by sea, he will  
figure,

Come his way by a shorter road; a great crime is no trouble.  
"I never taught him those ways, I never gave him such precepts!"  
Maybe not, in words; but you are the source and the fountain  
Of his evil intent, for any father who teaches  
Love of great wealth and inspires greed in his sons by the warnings  
Given in sinister ways, who shows him how he can double  
Patrimony by fraud, gives him a license, free rein,  
Absolute control: if you call him back, you'll not stop him  
Once he is under way. He'll laugh at you in derision  
As he rushes along, with the point of return far behind him.  
No one believes it's enough to be a partial delinquent,  
*So far, no farther!* Oh, no—they give themselves license much  
greater.

When you tell a young man he's a fool to give a friend presents,  
To help a relation in trouble, to lighten his poverty's burden,  
You teach him to rob and to swindle, to use any criminal method  
That will help him get rich. Your own devotion to money  
Is as great as the Decii had for their country, as great as  
Menoceus held for Thebes, if the Greeks bear reliable witness,



Thebes, where the legions sprang from the dragon's teeth in the furrows,

Warriors born with shields, and joining in terrible battle  
Just as if in their midst a bugler had instantly risen.

So you will see the fire, whose sparks you have struck, burning widely,

Carrying everything off. You will not be spared either, poor trembler.  
The lion you taught will roar loud in his den as he mangles his master.

Your horoscope may be known to astrologers. Surely. But waiting  
Takes a long time, and the thread is better cut off than spun out.

You stand around in his way, delay his prayers of thanksgiving.  
Your enduring old age is a young man's horrible torment.

Quick! Send for Archigenes, or purchase some of the compounds  
Mithridates has mixed. If you want more fruit from the fig tree,  
If you want to gather ye roses, you'd better, before you have dinner,  
Down the prescription devised by a king who was also a father.

I show you a splendid attraction, one you can't possibly equal  
On the stage or at games supplied by the smartest of praetors,  
If you will only watch at what peril to life the possessions  
Of men's fortunes increase, or the treasure grows in the strongbox,  
Or, more and more, the coins are banked in the temple of Castor  
Since that day when Mars the Avenger was robbed of his helmet,  
Unable to guard his own goods. It will do no harm to abandon  
The stage effects at the shows of Cybele, Flora, and Ceres;  
Human comings and goings are really much more amusing!  
Is there more fun to be had in watching men bouncing off spring-boards,

Sliding down the tightrope, than there is in your own silly antics?  
A dweller whose permanent home is a wretched Corycian vessel

Bounced up and down by the waves, by winds from the south and  
the northwest,

A desperate huckster of stuff that stinks and is not too expensive,  
You rejoice to import sticky wine from the shores of old Crete,  
Flagons and jars and flasks you can say are Jove's fellow townsmen,  
Yet the man who plants the soles of his feet on the tightrope  
Makes a living from that, and it keeps him from cold and from  
hunger.

You take risks, but for what? A thousand talents of silver,  
A hundred country estates. Look at our sea and our harbors  
Filled with mighty ships. Most of the population  
Now is at sea. A fleet, wherever your hope of a profit  
Calls it to sail, will come, beyond Carpathian waters,  
Past Gaetulian seas, beyond the straits of Gibraltar,  
Westward, to hear the sun hissing in Hercules' ocean.  
It is a noble return for all this trouble to sail home  
Proud, with purse stretched tight and moneybags full, having witnessed  
Ocean's awful freaks, including her juvenile mermen.

No one madness pursues all men: we think of Orestes  
In Electra's arms, facing the fire of the Furies;  
Ajax slaughters an ox, and thinks Agamemnon bellows  
Or the Ithacan roars. A man is in need of a keeper,  
Though he may not be tearing his cloak or his tunic to pieces,  
If he loads his ship to the gunwale with goods, and has only  
One plank between him and the deep, and the cause of his hardship,  
The reason for all this risk, is silver, cut into cartwheels,  
Little ones, stamped with minute mottoes and miniature portraits.  
Clouds and lightning come up. "Cast off!" cries the owner, whose  
cargo,

Pepper or wheat, fills the hold. "It's nothing really, that color  
Of sky, that bundle of black—summer lightning and thunder,  
Nothing to it at all!" But this very night the poor fellow  
Runs a good chance to be flung overboard as the timbers are broken,  
Overwhelmed by the wave, but hanging on to his wallet  
With his teeth or left hand. Yesterday not all the gold ore  
Tagus carries along, or the red-colored sand of Pactolus  
Would have sated his need, but today he is lucky in having  
Rags to cover his crotch, and a crust of bread; he's a beggar  
Painting pictures of storm, a shipwrecked pleader for pennies.

Property won by such ills is kept with fear and with trouble  
Even greater still; it is wretched to guard a huge fortune.  
Plutocrat that he is, Licinius orders a cohort  
Of his slave boys to stand on guard all night, with fire buckets  
Ready at hand; he fears for his amber, his statues, his marble  
Brought from Phrygian shores, his ivory, tortoise-shell badges.  
Diogenes' barrel won't burn; if it breaks, he can make a new house  
On the next day, or patch this with a staple or two and some solder.

Alexander knew, when he looked at that tub's great dweller,  
How much more happy the man who wanted nothing, how wretched  
The one who claimed for himself the whole world, willing to suffer  
Dangers as great as his deeds. You'd have no divinity, Fortune,  
If we had any sense. It is we who have made you a goddess.

Yet, if any one asks me how much is sufficient, I'll tell him:  
As much as hunger and thirst and cold are demanding; as much  
As sufficed Epicurus, content with his little garden;  
As much as the household gods of Socrates had in the old days.  
Nature never dictates one thing and Wisdom another.

Do I seem to be hemming you in with narrow precedents? Well,  
then,

Copy our customs a bit, take a sum that the emperor Otho  
Puts in the first fourteen rows; if you still feel like frowning and  
pouting,

Take a couple of knights, or twelve hundred thousand sesterces!  
If I have not even yet filled your lap, if you still are demanding,  
Nothing will ever suffice you, neither the riches of Croesus  
Nor the Persian realms, nor the fortunes which Claudius Caesar  
Gave to Narcissus, whose orders he took when he killed Messalina.



## THE FIFTEENTH SATIRE

### *On the atrocities of Egypt*

VOLUSIUS, who does not know what monsters lunatic Egypt  
Chooses to cherish? One part goes in for crocodile worship;  
One bows down to the ibis that feeds upon serpents; elsewhere  
A golden effigy shines, of a long-tailed holy monkey!  
Where the magic chords resound from Memnon, half-broken,  
Where with her hundred gates old Thebes lies buried in ruins,  
Whole towns revere a dog, or cats, or a fish from the river.  
No one worships Diana. But they have a taboo about biting  
Into a leek or an onion; this, they think, is unseemly.  
Oh, what holy folk, whose gardens give birth to such gods!  
Lamb and the flesh of kid are forbidden to every man's table;  
Feeding on human meat, however, is perfectly proper.

When Ulysses told stories like this in Phaeacia,  
King Alcinous was more than bemused, and some people  
Rose in wrath, and the rest laughed at the vagabond liar.  
“Why doesn’t somebody throw this tramp in the sea? He deserves  
it—

What he ought to get is his own Charybdis, a real one,  
For these lies he makes up, Laestrygonian monsters and Cyclops.  
I would sooner believe in the Clashing Rocks or in Scylla,  
Or in skins full of storms, or that yarn of the crew and Elpenor  
Grunting, changed into pigs at the tap of the light wand of Circe.  
What does he think we are—a people utterly brainless?”  
That’s what a man might say before he was drunk, or had swallowed  
More than a sip or two from Phaeacia’s powerful wine bowls.  
The songs the Ithacan sang had never a witness to prove them.

I have a story to tell, hard to believe, but it happened  
Not too long ago, in the year when Juncus was consul.  
This took place near the walls of the torrid village of Coptus,  
A crime of the crowd, and worse than any the dramatists tell of.  
Turn every tragic page, from the era of Pyrrha to our time  
And you will never find a crime that a race has committed,  
Not till now, so learn of this barbarous innovation.

There are two neighboring towns, Ombi by name, and Tentyra,  
Burning with hate for each other, a rivalry deep and long-lasting,  
A wound that can never be healed. On each side passionate fury  
Rises high, and the people despise the gods of their neighbors,  
Thinking that only their own are the kind that deserve recognition.  
When it was time for a feast, the leaders and chiefs of one village  
Thought it a wonderful chance to interfere with the other,  
So that they might not enjoy a day that was happy and festive,

Nor the banquet's delight, on a lavish scale, with the tables  
Spread near the temples and crossways, the revels to last a whole  
week,

Couches where nobody sleeps. Egypt is surely uncouth  
But when it comes to indulgence (and this I have noted in person),  
Its barbarian mobs can compete with Canopus's *haut monde*.  
Victory should not be hard when the enemy's half-seas over,  
Stammering, staggering drunk. On one side fellows were dancing  
While a blackamoor piped; they were all smeared up with their  
unguents,

Wearing flowers for hats, with garlands hiding their foreheads.  
On the other side was hate, and the hate was hungry.  
They begin to sound with taunting words as a prelude,  
These are the trumpet calls to spirits eager for brawling.  
Then come replies in kind, ugly and loud, and a clashing  
Where the naked fist performs as well as a weapon.  
Few are the jaws with no wound, and fewer still are the noses  
Unbashed in in the fight. Along the length of the columns  
You would see fractions of faces, unrecognizable features,  
Bones gaping through broken cheeks, fists that are bloody from  
punching

Enemies in the eye. But still, they think they are fooling,  
Playing at war, like kids, because they're not stomping on corpses.  
And certainly what is the sense of so many thousands a-brawling  
If nobody gets killed? And so the attack becomes fiercer.  
Raking the ground with their arms for stones, their natural weapons  
For this sort of melee, they begin to lift them, to hurl them—  
No such stones, of course, as were thrown by Ajax or Turnus,  
No such rock as the one Diomedes flung at Aeneas  
Hitting his hip. Right hands, these days, have no such strength in  
them.



Even in Homer's time the race was going to pieces,  
And what earth bears now is men who are evil but puny  
So that any god who sees them hates them, with laughter!

I've been digressing too long. Let's get back to our story.  
Re-enforcements arrived. One side, tremendously heartened,  
Dared to draw the sword, to press the battle with arrows.  
The Ombites charge, and those who live in the shade of the palm  
trees

Near Tentyra town, retreat in panic confusion.  
One of them goes too fast, goes down in his terror, is captured,  
Cut into little bits, one dead man in morsels, a banquet  
Eaten up, bones and all, by the victorious rabble.  
They did not bother to turn him on spits or stew him in kettles.  
Building a fire, they thought, was a long and tedious process.  
Better gobble him raw.

For this, at least, we are grateful  
In that the holy fire Prometheus brought down from the heavens  
Suffered no taint of pollution. I offer my felicitations  
To that element, then, and trust you share my rejoicing.  
The man who had the strength to fasten his teeth in a body  
Never tasted a thing he enjoyed any more than this meat.  
Do not pause to ask whether only the first man who tasted  
Sensed, in this horrible act, the satisfactions of pleasure.  
After the corpse was consumed, all gone, the last man in the column  
Dabbled his hands on the ground, and licked the blood off his  
fingers.

The Vascones, so we are told, prolonged their lives by such measures  
Once upon a time. But that was a different story:  
Fortune's hatred, war's last threat, extreme desperation,

Long-enduring siege, dire need, a terrible famine,  
All added up to acts which ought to arouse us to pity.  
After all of the grass, after all of the living creatures,  
Everything to which the gnawing of empty bellies  
Drove their desperate need, had all been consumed, and their pallor,  
Leanness, wasted limbs, drew even their enemies' pity,  
Then and only then did they tear, in the fierceness of hunger,  
Other men's limbs; indeed, they were ready to feed on their own.  
Who of men or of gods would refuse to pardon these starving?  
Even their victims' shades would be inclined to forgiveness.  
Zeno teaches us better: that Stoic master has shown us  
Many things, but not all, should be done for life's preservation.  
But how would Spaniards know this, as long ago as Metellus?  
Now the whole world has a Greek and Italian Athens;  
Gaul with her eloquence has instructed the pleaders of Britain;  
Even far-off Thule is talking of hiring professors.  
Yet these Vascones I have named were a noble people,  
So were the Saguntines, equal in manly devotion,  
Worse in the fate they endured, but Egypt is even more savage  
Than the altar that waits by the sea of Azov for strangers.  
There, if we can believe the stories the poets have left us,  
She who founded those rites—unspeakable!—still is contented  
With the infliction of death, and the victim need fear nothing further,  
Nothing more grim than the knife. But what calamity was it  
Drove the Egyptians to crimes like this? What infamous hunger,  
What implacable host at their walls could ever have forced them  
To this monstrous crime, this utterly loathsome defilement?  
What could they do any worse, if the land of Memphis were drying,  
Parched with drought, and Nile refused to rise to relieve them?  
No wild Cimbrian man, no barbarous Briton, no savage

Horde from the steppes, no monstrous Agathyrsians ever  
Raged like this weak mob, this useless and cowardly rabble,  
Hoisting their patches of sail on the masts of their crockery vessels,  
Pulling their puny oars on painted earthenware dinghies.  
A punishment fitting the crime you never will find for these people  
In whose minds, it seems, anger is equal to hunger.

Nature, who gave men tears, admits that she gave to them also  
Kindly hearts, and these are the source of our noblest feelings.  
Nature tells us to weep when a friend is made a defendant,  
Downcast, pleading his case; to grieve when a ward, whose complexion

Might be a boy's or a girl's, summons a swindler to trial.  
We sigh at Nature's command, when earth closes over a baby  
Too young for the funeral pyre, or the death of a virgin confronts us,  
Not her wedding day. What man who is good and deserving,  
Worthy the mystic torch, as the priest of Ceres would have him,  
Thinks that he has no share in another man's grief and misfortune?  
Sympathy makes us distinct from the brutes; so we, of all creatures,  
Are the only ones with an inborn sense of compassion,  
With a divine potential, an aptitude for expanding  
Life's creative arts, having derived from the heavens  
Feeling denied those who go on all fours, whose gaze is fixed downward.

In the first days of the world, our common creator endowed them  
Only with life, nothing more, but to us he also gave spirit  
So that mutual love would demand our giving and taking  
Mutual comfort and aid. The scattered assembled as peoples  
Leaving their ancient groves and the woods their ancestors dwelt in,  
Building homes for themselves, and for the gods of the household  
Adding neighbors next door, making their slumbers more peaceful,  
Safe in the trust of men near, their armor affording protection.

If a citizen falls, or staggers, terribly wounded,  
Sound the battle call on our common trumpet; common  
Be our walls of defence, with one key that locks all of our gateways.

Ah, but today we have a closer agreement of vipers  
Than among ourselves; a beast that is marked like another  
Acts with more kindness than we; and when did the stronger lion  
Take the weaker one's life? In what grove has the wild boar  
Ever gone down in death because of a bigger one's tusks?  
Indian tigers dwell in peace with Indian tigers,  
Bears get along with bears. Only the bloodthirsty human  
Thinks it not enough to have forged on impious anvils  
Fatal iron and steel. Primitive smiths were accustomed  
To beat on their forges the rake, the hoe, the spade, and the plough-  
share,  
Tiring themselves at their craft, but they never were makers of sword  
blades.

Now we look upon men whose wrath is not sated by murder:  
Killing is not enough; they think they must have for their victuals  
A human breast, face, arms. Suppose Pythagoras witnessed  
Any such horrors as these? What would he say? To what refuge  
Flee in despair? In his creed the beasts of the field were all sacred  
Even as man himself, and, more than that, he was careful  
Not to stuff his gut with indiscriminate fodder.



## THE SIXTEENTH SATIRE

### *On the prerogatives of the soldier*

GALLIUS, who can count up the rewards of a term in the army,  
Granted moderate luck? If I could go to cantonments  
Under a lucky star, let the gate swing open, I'm willing,  
Though a trembling recruit. For one hour of a fate that is kindly  
Has more value and worth than a letter of recommendation  
Sent by Venus to Mars, or a missive sent by his mother,  
Juno, who takes delight in the sandy beaches of Samos.

Let us consider first what special advantages soldiers,  
All of them, have over everyone else. Not least is the fact that  
No civilian dares beat you; what's more, if you give him a beating,  
He has to keep his mouth shut, he dare not show to the praetor

Teeth that have been knocked loose, or the gorgeous black and blue shiner

You have hung under the eye which the doctor won't promise to salvage.

If he takes it to court, the judge he gets is a noncom,  
Rough and tough, with hobnailed boots, and a thick-muscled jury,  
All in accord with the old camp law and the code of Camillus—  
*Let no soldier conduct litigation away from the standards.*

"In a soldier's case, of course, the centurion's verdict  
Is by far the most just, and vengeance will never be lacking  
If the suit I bring has the slightest basis of merit."

But the whole cohort is hostile; the maniples, down to a man,  
Are in effective agreement to have the redress you are asking  
Come out worse than the wrong you complained about in the first place.

Since you have two shins, you must have the brains of a jackass,  
Such as Vagellius has, that wonderful pleader, to challenge  
The envy of so many boots and all those thousands of hobnails.

Who, besides, would be so far from the city, attend you  
Like a Pylades, beyond the moat and the rampart?

Better dry our tears, and save our friends from annoyance  
Since the most they can do will be to offer excuses.

"Call your witness," the judge will say; but who will be daring,  
Bold enough, though he saw the fight, to acknowledge, "I saw it"?  
If there is such a man, I consider him worthy of having  
Our ancestors' beards and long hair. You can find, much more  
quickly, a witness

Who will perjure himself against a civilian's lawsuit  
Than you will get one to tell the truth if it injures the interests  
Or the good name of a soldier.

Let's look at some other matters,  
Perquisites and rewards that go with a term in the army.  
If some crook of a neighbor has helped himself to a valley  
Or a field of the land my ancestors left, if he's dug up  
The sacred boundary stone to which, each year, I give honor  
Bringing my wheaten cakes; if a debtor refuses to pay me  
Money he's borrowed, and claims that the signature's forged, and  
the papers  
Fraudulent, null and void, I shall have to wait for the season  
When the whole world goes to court, and the calendar's terribly  
crowded.  
Even then there will be delays by the thousands, postponements  
Hard to endure. You know how it is: it happens so often.  
The benches are all set up, and Caedicius, that eloquent lawyer,  
Is putting his cloak aside, when Fuscus departs from the courtroom,  
Needing to take a piss: and so, though everything's ready,  
Court is adjourned, we depart, resigned to fighting our battles  
In that tedious, slow, unyielding sand of the courtroom.  
But for those whom their arms protect, whose belts buckle round  
them,  
Their own will sets the time to schedule actions against them,  
Nor is their substance worn down by the law's long lingering daw-  
dling.

Soldiers alone possess the right of making their wills  
While their fathers are living. Payment earned in the service,  
So runs the law, is exempt from the sum and substance the father  
Has under his control. Therefore Coranus's sire,  
Trembling old man that he is, plays up to his son, since the latter  
Follows the standards and earns the stipend accorded for service.  
Duties well performed reward the son with promotion



Since it would certainly seem to be to the leader's advantage  
That his bravest man should be the most prosperous also,  
That they should all rejoice in medals and decorations,  
That they should all

THE POEM BREAKS OFF AT THIS POINT, IN THE MIDDLE OF A SENTENCE;  
SCHOLARS HAVE NO EXPLANATION, BUT SEEM AGREED THAT JUVENAL  
PROBABLY INTENDED A POEM OF APPROXIMATELY THREE HUNDRED LINES,  
SO THAT SATIRE XVI REALLY IS ONLY ABOUT A QUARTER OF A FULL POEM.

